

**Preparing for Adulthood: An exploration of the experiences of  
students with learning disabilities on their Person-Centred  
Annual Review.**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of  
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## **Abstract**

The Person-Centred Annual Review (PCAR) is advocated as an approach to reviewing the needs of students with an Education, Health and Care plan. This approach has its origins in the social model of disability and is a relatively new approach to statutory practices. There is some evidence that there are a number of complex social processes involved in the use of this approach and this research set out to explore how students with Learning Disabilities (LD) experienced the PCAR. Due to the lack of research involving the Preparing for Adulthood programme, the research focused on students with LD who were in Key Stage 4. Five participants shared their experiences and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used as a technique to generate a more informed understanding of this experience. The analysis revealed five Superordinate themes which were interpreted through the lens of Social Constructivist ontology. An interrogative account discusses the role of Positioning theory as an adjunct to the conceptual model derived from the literature. A narrative follows, providing what was reported, what meaning was made and what sense students made of the experience of the PCAR. This is situated within our current understanding of this phenomenon before consideration of the role and subject position of the Educational Psychologist is raised as an issue for reflection on practice.

**Keywords:** Preparing for Adulthood, Person Centred Annual Review, Learning Disabilities

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### **List of abbreviations**

BPS	British Psychological Society
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
EHCp	Education, Health and Care plan
EP	Educational Psychologists
LD	Learning Disabilities
PCP	Person-Centred Planning
PCAR	Person-Centred Annual Review
PfA	Preparing for Adulthood
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
YP	Young People

## Acknowledgements

*“eerm, like in school **we** all have our different subjects that **we** are strong at some schools, some of the subjects I’m not strong at and that so I need really help in them so I think in that review it taught me that you know even if you try and stuff you’ll reach that subject then you do really well and subject...” (Alice pg. 4, 99-104)*

Firstly, I would like to thank the students who shared their experiences with me. I have learned a lot of different things which I hope ultimately makes some difference in the someone’s world as it has done in my own.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter provides an understanding of the context of the current research. It introduces the Person-Centred Annual Review (PCAR) by describing the community of practice in which it originated. The concept of 'Learning Disability' will then be explained for the purpose of this research and a reflective account will allow the reader to situate the subjective position of the research in the process of this research. Finally, a rationale for the study is provided with consideration of the awareness of the researcher interconnectedness in relation to the phenomenon of investigation.

### **1.2 Person-Centred Planning**

PCARs' are derived from Person-Centred Planning (PCP); an approach to disability services which originated in North America. O'Brien & O'Brien (2000) describe the emergence of this approach from a community of practice which has roots in the Disability Rights Agenda (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976). Fundamental to the PCP approach, is the underpinning 'social model of disability' which is distinct in its location of disabling factors. This model posits that social and environmental barriers serve to perpetuate exclusion; therefore, society disables individuals. This conceptualization contrasted with the prevailing traditional model where the focus was on individual impairment.

The application of PCP techniques, in disability services, grew out of the first intensive practice-based training in the application of the normalization principle known as 'PASS' (Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1972) and culminated in the wider use and acceptance of the heading of 'PCP' by 1985 (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2000). This individualized planning approach might be described as a response to the previously dominant functionalist ideology in the context of disability; through its use of an interactionist perspective of relativity.

#### **1.2.1 National Context**

As described above, the growth in the application of PCP techniques spread from its initial use in North America. By 1979, the use of these practices was

evident in the field of disability services in Britain. This marked a potential shift in the dominant ideology within disability services. It emphasised ‘power’ in planning practices; through its emphasis on exploring what was important *to* rather than what was important *for* people with developmental differences (Thomson, Kilbane & Sanderson, 2008).

The work of Helen Sanderson Associates was heavily influential in the application of PCP in the UK context (Routledge, Sanderson & Greig, 2002; Sanderson, 2000). The White Paper, *Valuing People*, (Department of Health, 2001) saw the formal introduction of PCP as an approach to practice, in the UK, within adult learning disability services. This paper provided an authoritative guide to practice which focused on making children and adult services more responsive to individual needs, and informing the educational field of its duties. Subsequent legislation reinforced the application of PCP approaches within educational practices and advocated this approach as best practice. (Department for Children, Schools and Families, (2008); Department for Education and Skills, (2007); (2008). By 2015, The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice, provided specific guidance on the implementation of Person-Centred Approaches to statutory practice (Department for Education (DfE) & DoH, 2015) and made explicit reference to the use of these approaches, during the period around the transition to adulthood, as facilitative of good outcomes.

### **1.2.2 Preparing for Adulthood**

A national review of statutory practices, indicated that good outcomes were secured in local authorities that implemented an ‘individualised approach to planning’ (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills, (OSECSS, 2010). It also found that more positive outcomes were found in practices which “reviewed outcomes alongside stakeholders” (p.114) and “presented clear lines of accountability between service providers and stakeholders” (p.134). These findings contributed to a focus on individualised transition support and contributed to strategic decisions at governmental level and subsequent funding of the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) programme. This programme was situated within the ‘Delivering Better Outcomes Together’ consortium which was tasked by government to monitor, review and provide



further guidance on statutory practices across the education, Health and Care sectors.

### **1.2.3 Person-Centred Reviews**

The Annual Review is a statutory process for reviewing the progress and current needs for care and support of children and young people (CYP) with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) The Code (2015). Advice and guidance for the use of PCP, in the Annual Review process, was first provided by the DoH (2010). This advice described the 'Person-Centred Review' as distinct from previous approaches to planning. It outlined that 'the structure and techniques used in this approach would ensure that the young person was fully at the centre of the review' and that it 'identified actions that would make a difference to their lives'.

Statutory duties were placed on service providers in section 3 (part 19) of the Children and Families Act 2014, which made clear the principles under which local authorities were to carry out their functions. These principles reflected an interactionist perspective on 'disability'. The subsequent Code of Practice reinforced the obligation of educational practitioners in the use of Person-Centred thinking and planning.

### **1.5 The school context**

At a local level, the implementation of person-centred practice in schools is supported through training and guidance from the Educational Psychology Service. These practices are underpinned by a service model described as the 'Person-Centred Annual Review' (PCAR) (see outline in table 1) and is based on the structure outlined in the Good Practice Toolkit for EHCP transfers (Gitsham & Jordan, 2015). The educational provisions operate within the inner-city area of a large city in England with a multi-ethnic demographic. There is a larger population of secondary-aged pupils, relative to surrounding boroughs, known to be eligible for free-school meals (DfE, 2016a). Post-compulsory outcomes for CYP with SEN are lower than the national average (DfE, 2016b).

*Table 1. The structure of the PCAR (Gitsham & Jordan, 2015).*

1. Who's here?	Introductions of all members, the ground rules and what to expect from a PCAR
2. What do we appreciate about the young person?	Contributions of those who cannot attend the meeting are prepared in advance and then shared
3. What are their aspirations for the future?	All members of the PCAR share positive comments and highlight qualities about the CYP
4. What is important to the young person now?	A discussion about the CYP views and preferences is facilitated by members and then summarised
5. Previous targets and actions	If appropriate, the members review targets and actions from the previous meeting
6. What is going well?	Members discuss progress made, support and successful intervention regarding the views of the CYP
7. What is not going well?	Members discuss challenges, barriers and disagreements. Discussions are also held regarding targets which are not yet met and uncompleted actions from the previous meeting
8. What do we want the CYP to learn?	Outcomes are then generated, as appropriate, which are realistic and meaningful to the CYP
9. Person-centred action plan	A plan is drawn up which is based upon what is most important to the CYP and focuses on what is not working well
10. Conclusion	The meeting concludes with a positive summary of the process and a representation of the outcomes generated during the PCAR is provided for the CYP

## **1.6 Social discourses of ‘Learning Disability’**

The term ‘learning disability’ was made official in the UK by the Minister of Health in 1991 (Learning Disability Advisory Group, 2001). This term is often confused within practice, being used synonymously with educational problems which are understood as learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) (Hames & Welsh, 2002). In the UK, one conceptualisation of the term learning disabilities (LD) is used to describe a person who meets three criteria employed by both the World Health Organisation (WHO) diagnostic system (1980) and British Psychological Society (BPS) (2000) which include an:

- Impairment of Intellectual Functioning
- Impairment of Adaptive Functioning
- Onset prior to the age of 18

However, there are several different constructions of the concept of ‘learning disability’ which emphasise a different theory of aetiology. A leading charity, operating within the Disability Rights agenda, describe this construct as: “developmental differences which affect an individual’s intellect [...] There are different types of learning disability, which can be mild, moderate or severe” (MENCAP, 2016). This construction differs somewhat from that employed by the WHO, although it is similar in its location of the ‘problem’.

Terminology used within educational practice policy tends to reflect the educational needs of CYP. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2014) (The Code) describes a person of school age with a learning disability with consideration of:

- A significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age;
- A disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

These ways of describing ‘learning disability’ are essentially based upon the criteria outlined by the World Health Organisation lending to the dominance of

this perception within educational practices. Although dominant, these prevalent constructions do not go unchallenged. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2008) recognises disability as an evolving concept which results from:

“The interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers which hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”

This construct finds its roots in the social model of disability (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), 1970), a social theory which defines disability as the social oppression- not the form of impairment (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). More recently, a new construction of ‘disability’ is emerging which does not invalidate the social model but provides a critique of its limitations. Thomas (1999) presents materialist ontology which posits that the construct of disability is produced by capitalism; in which all phenomena are corollaries of economic and social forces (Oliver, 1999). From this view, impairment and disability are not dichotomous but a complex dialectic of biological, psychological, cultural and political factors (Shakespeare & Watson, 2010).

In line with the ontological perspective of this research (see Chapter 3), pre-social and pre-cultural concepts of ‘learning disability’ are not epistemologically sound. However, the national and local context, in which the research was conducted, required the researcher to enter the paradigm underpinning the traditional constructions of ‘learning disability’ in order to carry out this research.

### **1.7 Researchers’ position**

My interest, in this research area, stems from both personal and professional motivations and experiences. This predominantly centres on the support and development of children and young people. As an elder sibling of two young people who ‘meet the criteria for a diagnosis of Autism’, an iterative process of advice giving guided by my own assumptions have challenged and shaped my own world view over time.

Prior to my current role, as an Educational Psychologist in Training, I have worked for several charitable and local authority regulated services to provide support services in areas with high levels of economic deprivation. My experiences allowed me to enter the social world of children and young people (CYP) and their families, leaving with me a connection to them and curiosity and concern for their adult life. Having begun my Doctoral training, at the dawn of the recent educational reforms, I was drawn to the duties placed upon professionals laid out in The Code. Both my personal and professional experiences made me curious about the how best to implement statutory guidance relating to the transition to adulthood.

From my own sibling experience, my observations of society and the experiences of living with a LD prompted my thinking about what I really 'knew' of this. Most of my professional experiences focused on life before adulthood and my siblings were on the cusp of this experience. My Doctoral training provided me with a perspective to understand 'disability' and my role as a service provider within this. As my training progressed, I became aware of the opportunity presented through Doctoral research and was drawn to this specific phenomenon with the view of gaining a more informed understanding of and contribute to the work for social change within the Disability Rights agenda.

### **1.8 Research rationale**

As described above, changes in the approach to statutory practices have placed duties on educational professionals to implement PCP in their practice. The Code explicitly states that this 'should involve the use of person-centred approaches to practice for all CYP with an EHCp'. However, it is well recognised in the literature that fundamental to the use of this approach is an adoption of a different conceptual understanding of 'disability'. Holburn & Vietze (1999) also discussed the barriers to the adoption of PCP in disability services and highlighted the necessity of examination of the organisational governing structures. In section 3 of The Code, the statutory duties relating to the commissioning of services to improve outcomes includes: 'training the wider workforce' and 'the workforce and cultural changes necessary for a person-centred approach'.

The Children and Families Act determined that in exercising a function under section 19, a local authority in England must have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the CYP and their families. It highlights that these views must be taken into consideration regarding all aspects of planning and decision making. These statutory obligations provided further importance for an exploration of this focus on the PCAR.

The decision to focus this research on the views and experiences of students with LD is twofold. Firstly, the community of practice from which PCP emerged, sought to bring about social justice through the principle of normalization. These practices originated from a concern for the quality of services for people with developmental disabilities (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2002). Secondly, national indicators of outcomes in adulthood are relatively lower for students with LD, when compared to students who are not living with a disability (DfE, 2016). However, the use of individualised and PCP approaches has been advocated throughout recent governmental strategy, and subsequent literature. They have been promoted as a tool for maximising and improving outcomes for CYP with disabilities in adulthood (DoH, 2001; 2010); (OSECSS, 2010) (The Code, section 9 part 22).

As these reforms are relatively new to the educational field, there are a limited number of research investigations focused on the use of these practices within the educational context. The indicators of outcomes, for the population of people in which this approach has its origins, are poor and legislative enactment of its use was based upon government strategy to improve outcomes for CYP with disability. As described above, this has emphasised a focus on the PfA stage, described in The Code as having a focus from at least Key Stage 4 and onwards.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) have a statutory duty to implement PCP approaches in their practice. This includes any direct work in facilitating the PCAR and in training and facilitating changes to the wider workforce and culture necessary for the use of PCP. Therefore, this research sought to investigate, directly with students, their experience of the PCAR. It focused on the experiences of a vulnerable population with the poorest outcomes in adulthood

and on the PfA PCAR, which has been given most significance in governmental literature.

### **1.9 Summary**

This chapter has provided the reader with an overview of the origins of PCP. It then set out the national context and highlighted the focus on the PfA stage. Next, it described the local context in which this research was conducted before outlining the current social discourses relating to LD and the ideological and conceptual basis of this. The researcher's position was then disclosed and the rationale for this research was stated. The following chapter will explore the literature underpinning our current theoretical understanding of the social processes involved in the PCAR. It will focus in on generating an understanding of the experiences of students who are in the PfA stage of schooling, as outlined in The Code.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

The previous chapter provided a description of the ontological perspective through which PCP is derived. It also outlined the context in which this research was conducted. The current chapter explores the theoretical explanations of the phenomena under investigation. It begins with a detailed account of the strategy used to conduct a systematic search of the literature and provides details of how the researcher made decisions about which reports were selected for inclusion in the critical review. Next, a critical review of the literature presented with a focus on the theoretical explanation and the theoretical contribution to the current conceptual understanding. The chapter then moves into a brief discussion which aims to clarify the how the knowledge gained from each piece of research can explain our current understanding of this social process before the theoretical perspective in which this research is conducted is explained. The chapter ends with a statement of the aims and purpose of the current research.

### **2.2 Systematic search**

As described in the previous chapter, PCARs are derived from PCP which is broad in its application to many public service areas and across many systems and countries. Therefore, to conduct a comprehensive search of the evidence base the researcher had to consider the scope of this search. Firstly, as PCP originated in North America, spelling differences in British English and American English were considered and searches were conducted accordingly. Secondly, this search focused on gathering reports which sought the views of the person at the centre of the process. Therefore, it excluded those studies which sought the views of adults involved in the process as a proxy for CYP, and reports which amalgamated the views of other stakeholders with those of the person at the centre. Finally, the search sought to aid the understanding of the phenomenon specifically for those who could be described as experiencing PfA. Therefore, research which focused on adolescents and young adults were included. Studies which focused primarily on the views of younger school-aged populations were excluded from the critique.

EBSCO Host was initially used as search engine to explore the following databases: Academic Search Complete; British Education Index; Child



Development & Adolescent Studies; Education Research Complete; ERIC; PsychARTICLES; PsychINFO and Teacher Reference Center.

The following terms were used to explore the areas of literature: 'Person centred planning', 'Person centered planning', 'Person centred reviews', 'Person centered reviews', 'Person centred transition', 'Person centered transition', 'Transitional programs' (Education) AND 'person centred' and 'Transitional programs' (Education) AND 'person centered'.

Unless otherwise specified, all searches were carried out from 1980-2016 in line with the suggestions of the wider application of the use of the heading PCP internationally (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2002). The articles included for critique were written in the English language and were limited to those which focused on the adolescent and young adult population.

In addition to this, an advanced search was conducted using EThOS as a search engine. EThOS is the UK's national thesis service which contains a national aggregated record of all doctoral theses awarded by UK Higher Education institutions. This was carried out due to the relatively new legislative changes relating to the national application of a person-centred approach to statutory practices. It was thought that due to this, a number of highly relevant investigations of the current phenomena would not yet be published and available through the previous search. The terms used for this search were conducted in British English and included; 'Person centred planning', 'Person centred reviews' and 'Person centred' AND 'transition'. Doctoral theses selected were chosen due to their high relevance to this research and with reference to the inclusion criteria described above.

All reports included in the critique were limited to those which focused on exploring the views of participants on their experience or application of PCP. Details of the systematic searches can be seen in tables 2 and 3 respectively:

Table 2. Details of the systematic search using EBSCO host

<b>Boolean/ Phrase</b>	<b>Refinements</b>	<b>No. of articles found</b>	<b>Articles included in critique</b>	<b>Notes on Inclusion- Exclusion criteria</b>
<i>Person centred planning</i>	None	323	See below	Focused on use of Person Centred Planning  Sought the views of young people/ adult  Sought the views of young people with learning disabilities  <i>Book reviews</i>
	Limiters Adolescence (13-17yrs)  Young adulthood (18-29 yrs.)	15	Corrigan (2014)  White & Rae (2015)  (2)	
<i>Person centered planning</i>	None	594	See below	Focused on the use of Person Centered Planning  Sought the views of young people/ adult  Sought the views of young people/ adults with learning disabilities
	Limiters Adolescence (13-17yrs)  Young adulthood (18-29 yrs.)	45	Hagner, Kurtz Cloutier, Arrakelian, Brucker & May (2012)  Hagner, Helm & Butterworth (1996)  Dumas, De la Garza, Seay	

			& Becker (2002) (4)	
<i>Person centred reviews</i>	None	185	See below	Studies focused on the application of Person Centred Planning  Sought the views of the person at the centre  <i>Book reviews</i>  <i>Sought family perspective</i>
	Limiters Adolescence (13-17yrs)  Adulthood (18 yrs. & older)	7	No relevant studies	
<i>Person centered reviews</i>	None	267	See below	-
	Limiters Adolescence (13-17yrs)  Young adulthood (18-29 yrs.)	4	No new studies found	
<i>Person centred transition</i>	None	37	Taylor-Brown (2012)  (1)	Sought the views of young people

<i>Person centered transition</i>	None	76	No new studies	-
	Limiters Adolescence (13-17yrs)	11		

*Table 3. Details of systematic search using ETHOS database*

<b>Boolean/ Phrase</b>	<b>No. of articles found</b>	<b>Articles included in critique</b>	<b>Notes on inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Notes on exclusion criteria</b>
Person centred planning	13	Bristow (2013)	Sought the views of young people or young adults	
Person centred AND reviews	3	Griffiths (2015)	Sought the views of young people or young adults	Theses which sought the views of school-aged children
Person centred AND transition	9	No new studies	-	Theses which used adult's views as a proxy

### **2.2.1 Studies which met the inclusion criteria**

A total of 17 studies were considered for relevance to the current investigation to critique, however many were found to lack association with the underlying rationale for this research. A total of 8 research reports were selected for inclusion in the critical review. The details of each of these studies are outlined in the table below:

Table 4. Summary of research articles and theses included in critique

Author(s) of article	Title	No of participants and age range	Event experienced
Corrigan (2014)	Person-centred planning 'in action': Exploring the use of person-centred planning in supporting young people's transition and re-integration to mainstream education	6 5-15	PCP meeting to support transition/ reintegration
White & Rae (2015)	Person-centred reviews: an exploration of the views of students and their parents/carers.	16 10-14	PCAR key stage 2 and 3 transition points
Hagner, Helm and Butterworth (1996)	This is your meeting": a qualitative study of Person-Centered planning.	18 14-21	Two Person-Centred Planning meetings and six-month follow-up of outcomes
Taylor-Brown (2012)	How did young people identified as presenting with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties experience a person-centred transition review meeting?	3 13-14	Person Centred transition review meeting
Bristow (2013)	An exploration of the use of PATH (a person-centred	9 9-15	Person Centred tool (PATH) reintegration

	planning tool) by educational psychologists with vulnerable and challenging pupils		
Hagner, Kurtz, Cloutier, Arrakelian, Brucker and May (2012)	Person-Centered Planning for Transition-Aged Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders	47 16-19	Explored strategies and supports used to facilitate the participation of students with ASD in PC transition meeting
Griffiths (2015)	Person centred annual reviews: a vehicle to foster student engagement?: an exploration into students', parents/carers' and school staff perspectives of person centred annual reviews and their impact upon student engagement	19 13-16	PCAR and exploration of impact over time
Dumas, De la Garza & Becker	"I don't know how they made it happen, but they did": Efficacy perceptions in using a person-centred planning process	13 Average-33.5	Perceptions of self-efficacy

### 2.3 Critique of studies

Before beginning the review, it is important to situate the analysis within the humanistic perspective from which PCP is originally derived. As described in the

Introduction (see Chapter 1), PCP is derived from humanistic psychology which suggests that change, at an individual level, is influenced by a definable climate of psychological attitudes provided by those around the individual (Rogers, 1980). Rogers (1975; 1980) suggests that there are three main factors which facilitate this climate and which are necessary and sufficient for constructive psychological change within the individual:

- Congruence with the relationship
- Unconditional positive regard
- Empathic understanding

(Merry, 1988 pp.9)

This theory suggests that presence of these three core conditions, in the therapeutic milieu, are necessary and sufficient for the internal mechanisms and resources that drive an individual to be tapped into, promoting self-actualisation. With this theoretical framework in mind, this critical review assumed that studies which have investigated the PCP process would have an investigative focus on the concept of the 'psychological climate or environment' and/ or the 'internal mechanisms' as described by Rogers.

With this theoretical perspective in mind, the critical review provides an analysis of the conceptual framework employed by each piece of research. The first section will review studies which were categorised, by the current researcher, within a humanistic perspective. The second, critiques a study which explores the planning process through ecological systems theory. Next, several studies which framed their investigation within motivational theory are reviewed and finally two studies employing social cognitive theory are critiqued. Throughout the review, studies were evaluated for quality with reference to the seven guidelines for evaluating qualitative research as outlined by Elliott, Fischer & Rennie (1999).

### **2.3.1 Humanist theory**

Hagner, Helm & Butterworth (1996) conducted a qualitative investigation of the use of a person-centred planning process called 'natural supports'. The study sought to explore how the process was: being implemented, how it was viewed

by those who participated in it, the kinds of plans formulated from the process and the initial impact on the lives of the individuals. Data were gathered through a combination of participant observation, in-depth interviews with stakeholders and document analysis.

This research was conducted over a six-month period with six participants, aged 16-22, who were making the transition from school to adult life. Interviews were analysed using a data driven approach, however it is unclear from the report how the analysis generated the interpretation presented in the findings and discussion. The researchers outline three themes which appear only to provide descriptive accounts of what took place in the meeting with little interpretation. Nonetheless, the researchers highlight some important factors that serve to facilitate or impede the process, including: constraints on equal participation, fidelity to the model and the experience of the facilitator. The findings also described the initial impact on the lives of individuals. These findings suggested that meetings which generated specific, accountable plans had an increased impact on reported positive outcomes six months after the process.

Unfortunately, attempts to explore how the process was viewed and the initial impact of the process are not clearly presented and any attempts to ground the interpretation in examples appear to exclude the views of the person at the centre. Excerpts of recordings from the PCP meeting are included, although this only provides evidence for the descriptive accounts and therefore does not demonstrate that the researchers achieved the general research tasks stated in the report. This is unfortunate, as it lends to the weakness of coherence and credibility in this piece of research.

The theoretical orientation of this study is not clearly defined, although, it is possible to assume that it takes a Humanistic perspective due to the emphasis on investigating what took place in the meeting as it related to subsequent perspective on planned outcomes. Overall, although it is difficult to take away useful evidence relating specifically to the views and perspectives of the person at the centre of the meeting, this piece of research is conceptually sound. The researchers sought to gather evidence of the complex social process which occurred within the meetings and the subsequent impact on the lives of the



individual of focus. The qualitative data collection techniques employed included; observation of meetings, interview and document analysis- which aligns with these aims respectively. Nonetheless, with consideration of guidelines for quality for this review, coupled with poor evidence of the views of the person at the centre, the strength of the evidence for this investigation is judged to be weak.

Corrigan (2014) reports a mixed method approach to the evaluation of a PCP process, adapted from the Essential Lifestyle Planning framework (Smull et al., 2005). The study focused on planning for CYP who had experienced prior school exclusion and who anticipated educational transition/re-integration. The research aims were two-fold: to explore the views and experiences of all stakeholders during the use of the process and to explore reported outcomes over time for young people.

The views and perceptions of six CYP, aged between 5-15 years attending mainstream or alternative provision and 43 adults were sought immediately after and up to 19 weeks following the meeting. Although it is not clearly stated in the report, Corrigan appears to employ a Humanistic perspective to this investigation as the questionnaire contained 11 rating response questions based on the core elements of PCP which are reported to be derived by Holburn (2002). Measures of growth of outcomes were also collected using Target Monitoring Evaluation. Participant views and perspectives of the effectiveness of the approach for supporting transition/ reintegration were captured using open ended questionnaire.

Corrigan found that overall the process was perceived positively however, perceptions of the progress or impact of the meeting over time revealed lower perceptions of competence for young people. Corrigan also reported that participant's reflections indicated that the inclusive elements of the process generated feelings of empowerment, engagement and ownership of their own plans. The findings also highlighted that CYP may experience a lack of support or advocacy during the PCP process. Ratings of progress using the Target Monitoring Evaluation framework indicated that members of the meeting, exclusive of the young person, perceived that they had made progress in defined areas.

A limitation of this study is the lack of coherence. The research set out to explore the views and experiences of all stakeholders and the reported outcomes for over time for young people. It is unclear why ratings of fidelity to the core elements were gathered and why an account of the supportive and obstructive factors of PCP is provided in the discussion. Also, exploring and engaging with young people is outlined in the methodology of this study, however the sample consisted of seven times the number of adults as it did young people and there is an indication that only four of the six student's views were gathered during the second collection of rating progress over time. Furthermore, the integration of themes from young people with adult stakeholders make it difficult to ascertain what the views or experiences of CYP were in this study. Where excerpts of qualitative data are reported for young people there isn't any evidence of labels for subthemes making it difficult to understand how young people's views fit with the findings.

However, this study provides useful evidence of some relationship between perceived fidelity to the core elements of PCP and ratings of progress in derived outcomes over time. This might suggest that the approach is useful in promoting growth in a range of social, emotional and learning goals for CYP. However, it is difficult to make judgements about the strength of the evidence for this report, therefore, the strength of this study is judged to be medium.

### ***Summary of evidence for humanistic processes***

Both pieces of research provide tentative evidence of the influence of the three core conditions in perceptions of progress over time. What does appear to be missing from both studies, is any new knowledge about the internal mechanisms for the person at the centre (as described by Rogers). This might be because of the emphasis on the views and perceptions of the stakeholders at the meeting and not on the individual. Nonetheless, these studies indicate that the complex social process occurring during the meeting had some effects on the perceptions of those involved in the process.

### **2.3.2 Ecological systems theory**

Only one study was found to take an ecological systems perspective whereby the process was explored from the frame of the interaction between the

environmental systems and the individual. Bristow (2013) employed a pragmatic approach to examine the use of Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH), a person-centred planning tool, by Educational Psychologists in facilitating meetings with nine students aged 9-15 years. The PATH tool draws on Person-Centred techniques to support planning for their future. The research is grounded within an ecological systems theory perspective and demonstrates coherence through the approach to sampling. The researcher includes a balance of 'natural' and 'professional/ paid' support members alongside the young person in what she described as differing levels around the child. The investigation sought to discover how stakeholders described their experience of PATH.

Participants took part in semi-structured interviews and inductive thematic analysis was employed to analyse data. Scaling questions were also used as a means of gathering the student's perceptions of feeling comfortable and listened to during the meeting. The findings indicate that PATH appeared to have a positive effect upon pupil-parent and parent-school relationships. Interestingly, Bristow found that parents perceived the PCP meeting as potentially intimidating for their child and the children's accounts spoke of feeling nervous and uninformed about the process. Pupils at the centre of PATH appreciated the dream phase and could recount the interactions of members during the meetings during this step. Bristow also found that pupils reported a perceived difference in themselves six weeks after the process and perceived the process to be useful. This, however, was not found for parents who reported mixed views of the usefulness of PATH. Overall, relationships appeared to be improved because of the process from the perspective of all participants and analysis of pupil accounts revealed perceptions of improved relationships within their microsystem.

This study was based on a sound theoretical perspective which is demonstrated throughout the methodology. The sampling strategy used adds weight to the strength of this study as it enables the findings to be represented in a way that achieves coherence and integration while preserving nuances in the data. Although, a critique of the thesis relates to the separation in the presentation of themes derived from the two levels identified systems around the child. These

findings were not integrated which makes it difficult to make a judgement of the wider theoretical interpretation presented in the research. The study might have been improved if with an interpretation of how these findings relate to one another relate to one another (mesosystem) and across all layers of the system. This may have served to clarify or expand the understanding thereby strengthening the study.

### **Summary of evidence for ecological systems perspective**

The findings of this study provide a useful conceptualisation of the facilitative climate. From an ecological perspective, it might be hypothesised that the facilitative effects of the main conditions involve the bi-directional influences between those within the YP mesosystem. This is interesting, as it goes further than the suggestions of the previous studies, in that it implies that the three conditions (Rogers) could relate to the interactions *between* those within the mesosystem not just *toward* the YP.

### **2.3.4 Self-Determination Theory**

Hagner. et al (2012) utilised a randomised controlled trial design to assess the impact of participation in family-centred intervention, which included a PCP element. The sample included 47 young adults aged between 16-19 years old- lending to the strength of the investigation. Data were collected to assess the impact of intervention on the person of focus and their parent's expectations for adult life. Measures of self-determination and career decision-making ability were also assessed for impact through self-report questionnaire. Analysis of quantitative data found a significant increase in the perceptions of both the individual and their parents on measures of future expectations. A significant increase in scores on measures of self-determination and career decision-making ability were found for the treatment group. However, no significant effect was found for the waiting list control group. This finding was explained by the researchers as a combination of 'maturation over time and exposure to models of transition assistance provided to the waiting list group.

A major critique of this study relates to the data collection technique. Although the researchers state that surveys used to gather perceptions were extensively field tested for use with populations with disabilities, they later report that some

participants required support and rephrasing of items on the survey to access them. The findings also indicate that although there was an increase in ratings on measures for both groups, a decrease in ratings of future expectations was found for parents in the waiting list control group. Also, the increase found in future expectations by the individual was not significant. Unfortunately, these findings are not explained by the researchers in the report.

The strengths of this study relate to its logical consistency. From the outset of the report, the researchers state the purpose to assess the effectiveness of the transition planning approach. This aim was largely achieved and the researchers attempted to employ field tested measures of the construct identified as the dependent variable. It also appears that appropriate methods of statistical analyses were employed although it is difficult to evaluate which component of the transition planning approach effected the dependent variables as there were three elements to the family-centred intervention applied. Overall, the study provides a useful explanation of the possible role of self-determination theory in terms of explanatory power for the internal mechanisms involved in the hypothesis of change outlined by Rogers (1980).

Griffiths (2015) presents a Doctoral thesis reporting an exploration of the views of students, parents and school staff on the PCAR process and their subsequent perceptions of the impact on student engagement. Building on previous research, Griffiths acknowledges both internal and external factors implicated in student engagement and the study appears to have been conducted using an eclectic theoretical model encompassing the ideas of self-determination theory but grounded within an ecological systems theoretical framework. Nineteen participants aged 13- 16 years old, engaged in Focus groups and data were analysed using thematic analysis within and between participant data sets. What is described as a 'level of interpretative analysis' was conducted to generate and draw inferences relating to student engagement.

Four themes reflecting positive views on the PCAR process were found. Griffiths highlights a salient theme 'Affect' generated from focus group data, which spoke of student's nerves and uncertainty about the PCAR. Griffiths

report that students perceived the PCAR process as emotionally evoking for both themselves and for the adult members of the meeting.

Unfortunately, it is unclear how the researcher was able to generate the conclusion that PCARs impact upon student engagement. Perhaps this was effected by the lack of methodological rigour regarding the data analysis techniques which were described as a level of interpretation. Although the study does provide some evidence of views of stakeholders on the PCAR it is weakened by the poor quality of the approach to accomplishing evidence for the impact of the approach on student engagement. It is difficult to take away much new information which informs our understanding of either element of the complex social process under investigation. However, the thematic analysis does provide anecdotal evidence about students views on their future. Participants describe their views on how they have changed and attribute this to their perception of the other stake holders' new ways of perceiving them following the meeting.

Overall, the study provides some useful accounts of the views of the person at the centre on the PCAR. However, the investigation is not conceptually sound. Griffiths application of the proposed eclectic theoretical framework is incoherent in terms of the ontological position stated. There is little clarity around the use of focus groups to elicit the views of the individual (in which students report back on their initial paired discussion) in relation to the epistemological assumptions of the research. In conclusion, it was difficult for the findings of the study to resonate with the reader as it lacked clarity. Therefore, the research was judged to be weak.

White and Rae (2015) conducted a mixed methods exploratory investigation of the views of students and their parents on their PCAR. The researchers situate the sample focusing on 16 participants at the year 6 and year 9 key stage transition points. A broad range of identified SEN is represented in the small sample lending to the study's strength, however, this does reveal that the sample included only two of 16 participants who were in key stage three. It might be possible to infer that the maturity level of many of participants at key stage 2 would differ and could have an impact on their accounts of the process and perceptions of control. Also, it could be argued that the focus of the PCAR

would be different for younger children in comparison to adolescents making it difficult to compare interpretations of their perceptions.

The researchers provide clarity in this report by detailing the theoretical orientation of the research. Self-Determination Theory is applied as a framework for understanding the processes involved in the meeting. Three clearly stated research questions provide coherence throughout the methodology and within the presentation of findings. Using a combined approach, the researchers elicited the views of participants through semi-structured interview with pre-and post-measures of control, motivation, perceptions of; being listened to and positivity towards school. Thematic analysis was used to analyse interview data revealing four themes. The findings of this study indicate that participants viewed the PCAR process as an opportunity to gain information and be heard. It also indicated that the PCAR is viewed as 'child-friendly' and can be a positive experience. Quantitative data revealed no significant change in perceptions of control one week prior to and following the PCAR. Scaling questions also revealed no meaningful change in ratings of positivity or motivation following the PCAR and no notable change in knowledge of their learning targets following the PCAR.

Unfortunately, the report does not provide a clear presentation of the implications of the qualitative findings in relation to the theoretical perspective which was initially stated. It is also unclear, from the report, whether or how the themes derived from student and parent data sets were used to generate overarching themes. This lends to the weakness of this study, as the discussion presents what appears to be Superordinate themes with no description of how this was interpreted. It is unfortunate that much of the discussion in this paper focuses on the analysis of the accounts of parents, given that the study sought to gain the views of both students and parents. Again, this lends to the weakness in the ability to evaluate the accomplishment of the general research task.

Further to this, White and Rae report quantitative findings which are attributed to the duration of the meeting. However, later in the report it is explained that participants experienced difficulty engaging with the measures indicating that

the interpretation of these scores should not be attributed to involvement in the PCAR process. This is particularly unfortunate as it appears that the theoretical perspective applied in this research related only to the quantitative arm and there is no account from researchers which applies this perspective to qualitative findings.

Although this critique identifies some theoretical and interpretative flaws, White and Rae provide useful evidence about the views of students with a broad range of SEN on their PCAR. It also attempts to further explore a theoretical construct associated with the PCAR from previous research. Overall, the strength of evidence from this critique is judged to be weak.

### **Summary of evidence for the role of motivational theory**

Overall, the weight of evidence of these three studies is mixed. It is interesting that although these studies employed Self-Determination Theory as a framework for investigating the process, this review found a lack theoretical coherence regarding the interpretation presented in the reports. Nonetheless, in building upon our understanding of the internal mechanisms indicated by Rogers, the findings of these studies provide novel explanations of what is occurring. It is possible that what is key with regard to the connection between the psychological climate and the internal mechanism is how this climate is perceived by the person of focus. These investigations suggest that this could relate to how members of the PCAR are perceived to respond to the views of the individual of focus, and/ or how they perceive that these views are followed up on. It is also possible that an important element of the connection between these two complex social processes relates to how the individual perceives the emotional responses of other members of the PCAR.

### **2.3.5 Social Cognitive theory**

Dumas, De La Garza, Seay & Becker (2002) conducted a qualitative study exploring efficacy perceptions within the PCP process for 13 individuals with developmental disabilities. The study sought to understand what effect participation in a planning approach had on beliefs of self-efficacy using a theoretical perspective based on social learning theory. Data were collected from three different sources which included document reviews of both the



person-centred plan and the agency service plan, and were triangulated for consistency of the researcher's interpretations. Eight of 13 participants engaged in direct interviews and five proxy interviews were conducted with a close family member. Interviews explored reflections on the meaning and outcomes of PCP from the perspective of the person at the centre.

An interactive and systematic approach to data analysis was employed, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994), in order to identify themes and patterns within and between transcripts. Themes were presented with examples of data, grounding the researchers' interpretations and three methods were used to enhance credibility. Theoretical coherence was demonstrated through the presentation of five themes reported as demonstrating the presence or absence of perceptions of self-efficacy.

The findings indicated a lack of understanding of the PCP process interpreted as limiting the development of self-efficacy. These limiting elements were also perceived through participant perceptions of lack of control in directing service through the process. This was interpreted as occurring through external attributions of control toward service coordinators and was related to feelings of agency in eliciting change during the meeting. The researchers' analysis also found that lack of creativity during planning from members of the PCP process and restrictive service delivery plans contributed to low personal efficacy.

The researchers also found that a greater understanding of the steps of the process effected reflections of mastery experiences (the results of previous experiences) in relation to their personal-efficacy beliefs in controlling the PCP meeting and efficacious beliefs in relation to achieving the outcomes of the meeting. Although it is also possible that the interactive approach employed to data analysis and the enhanced measures for ensuring credibility could account for this improved perception during interview. It is suggested that the use of this type of procedure could generate a measure of therapeutic gain through reflection for participants (Smith, 1993).

Overall, this study provides an illuminating account of the interaction and connection between the psychological climate and the internal mechanisms proposed by Rogers. The design of the study is theoretically coherent, the findings are grounded in examples which enable the reader to understand how

these interpretations were generated from the data. The researchers have also applied a number of credibility checks, enabling the specific research tasks to be accomplished and a rich account of the participants' perceptions to be ascertained. The findings and implications of the study resonated with its reader and the quality of the study is judged to be strong.

In a small scale idiographic study, Taylor-Brown (2012) explored how the Person-Centred review was experienced by three boys in year 9 from a Social Cognitive perspective. The author situates the sample by providing details of educational provision and primary needs of the young people and identifying social, emotional and behavioural need. Taylor-Brown also describes the event experienced in the report enabling the reader to evaluate the relevance of the research to their understanding.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse semi-structured interview data, revealing Superordinate themes depicting the reflections of participants on how the process was experienced. Taylor-Brown's interpretation spoke of the participants' reflections on the psychological climate. Participant accounts highlighted their perception of being perceived as a whole person, providing them with new narratives about the storied nature of themselves. The interpretation of the context in which the boys were being educated spoke of the possible impact of the psychological climate on students' constructions of their own agency in terms of the overarching theoretical framework which underpins the climate of the school. Analysis also revealed perceptions of transparency and expectations of reciprocity attributed to the visual approach used during the meeting.

Although this study provides a theoretically and methodological sound account, the findings may be restricted in relation to their theoretical generalisability due to the level of expertise of the Senior Educational Psychologist who facilitated the meetings. It is possible that in practice and other research conditions, this factor may not be available in the use of this process. By this, I mean that facilitation of a PCAR by a Senior practitioner who would have received training in the conceptual and theoretical basis of PCP may have a differing set of skills and knowledge which could impact on some of the social processes which occur during the meeting. Therefore, although it does not take away from the

findings of the study, it is important to put this factor in the wider context of this critical review.

Critical analysis of this study indicates that the specific research tasks set out by the author were accomplished. The study provides a rich and interpretative account of the experience of the PCAR process for these participants. The methodology employed is appropriate and the interpretations relate to social cognitive theory. The report also includes excerpts of data enabling the reader to judge it to represent accurately the phenomenon of study. From the perspective of the current research the weight of evidence for this investigation is strong.

### **Summary of evidence for social cognitive processes involved in the PCAR**

These two studies provide useful conceptualisations of the complex social interaction influencing the internal mechanism described by Rogers. They provide a theoretical explanation which describes the importance of the perceptions and subsequent reflections of the individual

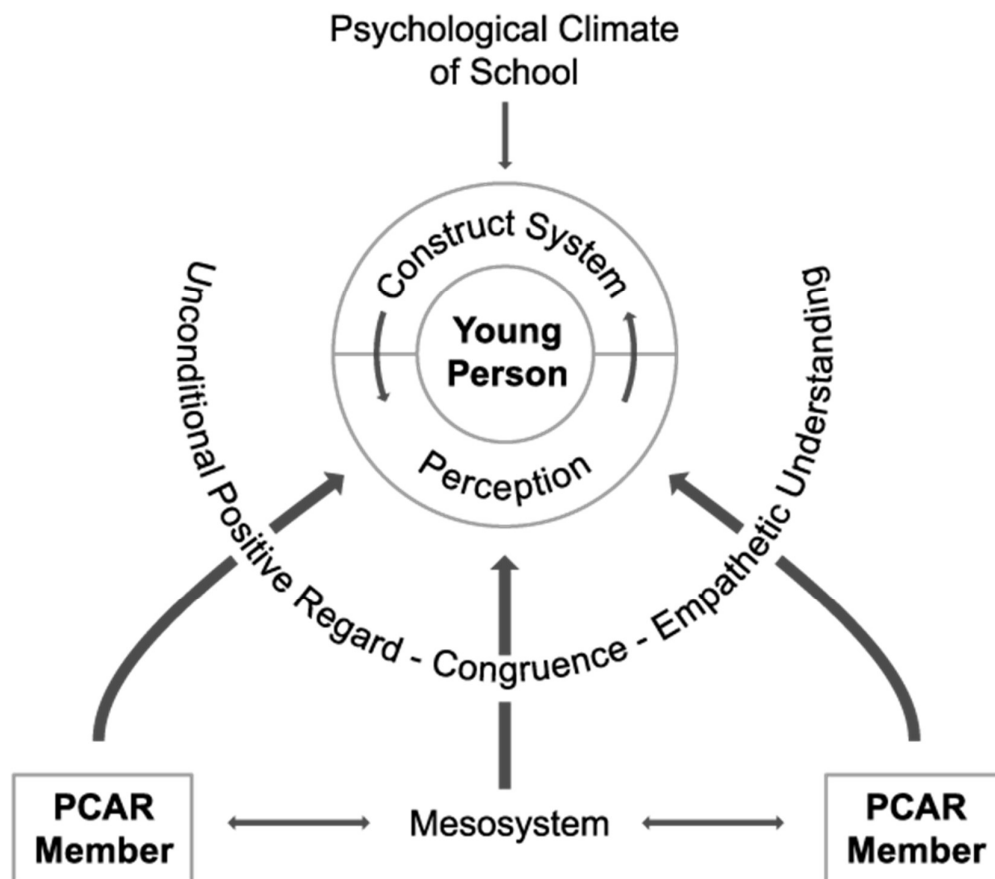
When conceived through a social-cognitive perspective, it may be possible to infer that YP analyse this experience and reflect upon it in relation to their own thought processes thereby deriving new knowledge about themselves and their world (Bandura, 1989).

### **2.4 Overview of current literature**

This review found that there are a limited number of studies which focus on the views and experiences of young people (YP) (or young adults), on the use of PCP in educational practices. No research was found which focused on the views or experiences of the focus on PfA and there is also a lack of research which explores the views of YP with LD on the PCAR process.

As demonstrated through this review, each of the studies investigated the psychological climate and/ or the constructive psychological change related to the PCP process. Each study also framed the phenomena within a distinct theoretical framework, providing an additional component of knowledge about the complex social processes and interactions occurring within and as a result of this process. Taken together, these theoretical components provide a basis

for a tentative psychological model of the social processes involved in the PCAR process. What could be understood from this critical review is depicted by figure 1 and described below:



*Figure 1. Conceptual model of our current theoretical understanding of the processes involved in the PCAR*

#### **2.4.1 The psychological climate**

As depicted in the diagram, at its core it appears that the three core conditions are involved in the interactive process occurring within the PCAR (Hagner, Helm and Butterworth, 1996). From what can be learned from the evidence base, this is involved in relation to how these conditions are perceived by the individual of focus from members of the meeting toward themselves (Corrigan, 2014). There is also evidence that this interactive process is involved in the perception of the individual of focus within the bi-directional interaction within the meso-system (Bristow, 2013); (Griffiths, 2013).

### **2.4.2 The internal mechanisms**

Research which focused on exploring 'constructive psychological change' provides an understanding of the possible theoretical processes involved for the individual of focus in relation to the PCAR. As described above, the perception of these conditions within the meso-system appears to have a role in this complex social process. Further to this, the evidence base suggests that the construct of psychological change appears to be influenced by social verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1977). This means that the PCAR acts as a source of efficacy information (Dumas, De La Garza, Seay & Becker, 2002) which mediates the young person's perception of social belief altering how they construe themselves within the psychological climate of the PCAR and, potentially, the psychological climate of their school environment (Taylor-Brown, 2012).

Analysis of the literature would suggest that this social process is not related to individual explanations of motivation interacting with autonomous or controlled environments (Griffiths, 2015); (Hagner. et al, 2012); (White & Rae, 2015) indicated by the weak explanatory power of self-determination theory.

Although the application of PCP to educational practices is a relatively new practice, what evidence is available for its use with the population of focus for this research, indicates that it can be viewed as a positive and useful process. As indicated in the previous chapter, outcomes in adulthood for YP with LD remain relatively poor (DfE, 2016b). In order to contribute to and extend our understanding of this phenomenon this research aims to extend the findings of Taylor-Brown (2012) through an investigation of the perceptions of students of this experience. The research also aims to address a gap in the evidence base regarding the focus on PfA in Key stage 4.

### **2.5 The theoretical perspective**

This research was framed within personal construct theory in order to explore the meditative social cognitive process suggested by the critical review (Taylor-Brown, 2012). This framework posits that individuals construe events, others, and social interactions, through binary perceptions. These perceptions are distorted by our prior binary constructs influencing our image of the world (Kelly, 1955). Kelly suggests that individuals differ in their perception of binary

constructs and vary in the elements in which they are applied to. In the context of the implications of the Taylor-Brown's study it is possible to hypothesise that the meditative social cognitive process could relate to the 'construct system' of students which consist of dichotomies which are most useful for the individual to predict events in their world. Within this perspective, it is possible to explore the super-ordinate constructs which imply the truth or falsify others in relation the experience of students with LD on their PCAR.

## **2.6 Aims of the research**

The scarcity of research in this specific research focus and legislative requirement to implement the approach, provides a basis for the need for this investigation. Kelly (1955) suggests that the 'construct system' includes the person as they see themselves and is a basis from which individuals build their own future construct system.

The aims of this exploratory study were to give voice to the views of students with LD on their experience of the PCAR approach, provide an understanding of the lived experience of PfA through the PCAR process and provide a viable account of student's experiences within the socio-cultural, political and historical context of this research. This investigation was framed within Personal Construct Theory in order to investigate its explanatory power within the conceptual framework derived from the evidence-base. A heuristic approach was used due to the ability to challenge, confront, or doubt the current understanding of phenomena (Moustakas, 2001). It was hoped that this would enable the researcher to interrogate and discuss the current construct of the PCAR, reified by its dominance in literature, from the frame of reference of the students from whom this process is implemented.

## **2.7 Research questions**

To explore these constructions, the following research questions were generated:

1. What do students with learning disabilities report of their experience of their Person-Centred Annual Review process?

This research question sought to explore the spoken account given by students of their experiences.

2. What meaning do students with learning disabilities make of their Person-Centred Annual Review process?

This research question sought to explore the importance or significance that students made of their experience of their PCAR.

3. What sense do students with learning disabilities make of the focus on Preparing for Adulthood during their Person-Centred Annual Review?

This research question focused on exploring what students recounted about what they perceived or detected of their experience of their PCAR.

## **2.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter opened with a detailed outline of a systematic search conducted to elicit relevant research from the literature. It then critically reviewed eight studies found to be highly relevant to the phenomena of investigation; focusing on the weight of evidence and explanatory models used within each study. Next, a summary of the evidence found was presented and an integrative model was provided to reflect our current understanding of the social process involved in the PCAR. The theoretical perspective of the current research was described before the rationale and aims were outlined. The chapter concludes with a statement of the research questions addressed by this research. The following chapter will explore the methodological approach taken in order to provide a rich and coherent extension of the theoretical model in addressing the research questions.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter will provide a detailed account of the methodology used in this research. It will begin with the current researchers understanding of research paradigms, before clarifying the ontological perspective within which the research was conducted. Next, a description of the epistemological assumptions driving the method of data collection follows and a rationale is provided for the methods used approach to data analysis used in this research. The strategy used for sampling is justified and a detailed account of the procedures used in this studied are outlined. Issues relating to the use of the selected method are discussed with reference to the literature and then the role and functions of the researcher are disclosed. The chapter closes with details of the ethical assessment of this study and ends with a description of a framework for reviewing qualitative research.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Punch (1998) defines a paradigm as a term used to describe a set of assumptions held about the social world and about what constitutes proper topics and techniques for inquiry. Kuhn (1962; 1970) defines paradigm as the underlying assumptions and intellectual structure upon which research in a field of inquiry is based. Mertens (2005) asserts that these set of assumptions guide and direct our thinking and our actions when engaging in research. With this view in mind it is necessary for researchers to develop clarity and awareness of the perspective in which their research is framed in order to address their aims and answer their research questions.

##### **3.2.1 Realist and relativist realms**

In the context of this research, it is useful to outline two of the realms within the paradigm structure. As discussed in Chapter 1 (1.6), there are different social discourses of LD which can be located in different realms of the paradigm structure. Discourse which located the aetiology of 'disability' within the individual can be described as the more traditional approach. These discourses are underpinned by the assumption that the physical and social world are independent of those who observe it. From this view of objectivity, scientific



knowledge is apprehendable through unbiased observation of phenomena. This realist ontology is evident in the traditional discourse through the criteria used to define LD. The assumptions of these criteria are underpinned by a determinate epistemology, due to the inability of the observer to control the nature of events of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

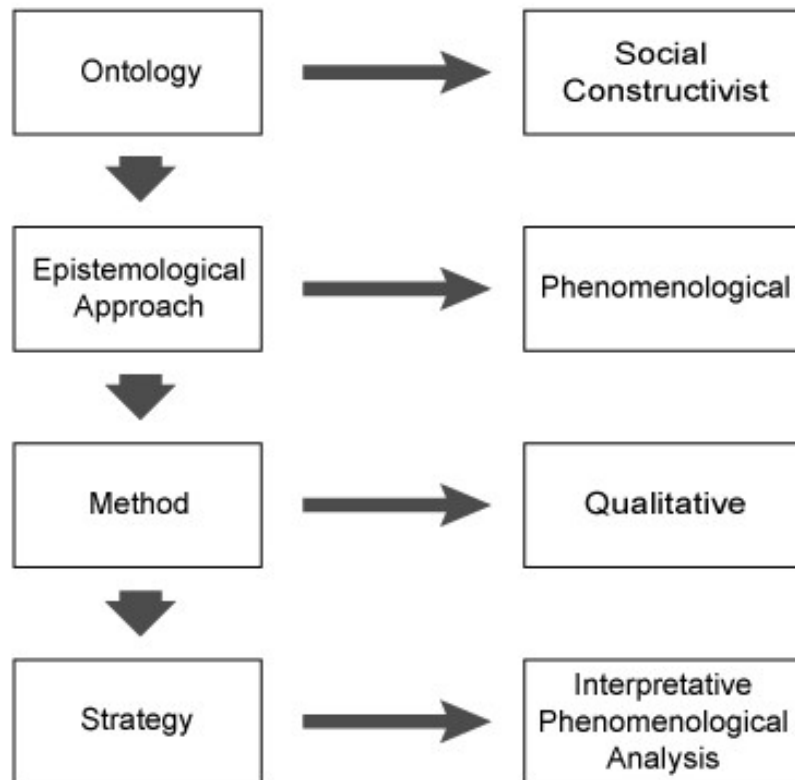
The relativist realm, presents a contrasting view of social reality emphasising the researcher's subjectivity. This realm rejects the notion of an objectively apprehendable 'reality' or 'truth' but instead understands these in the form of reified constructions of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These structures are crystallised through notions of historical situatedness and power and status. Social discourses of 'disability', which appear to be located in this realm, consider issues of historical realism and trustworthiness in the conceptualisation of the aetiology of disability.

### **3.2.2 Conceptual framework**

The current research is concerned with the phenomenon of the PCAR which could be investigated through different realms within the paradigm structure. The findings of literature review provide some tentative theoretical constructs which could be measured for validation or non-falsified hypotheses. The research also aims to explore the experience of PfA. Therefore, the realist realm was deemed to be incongruent with these aims. The relativist paradigm offers a set of philosophical assumptions in which structural and individual realms of meaning are apprehendable. These assumptions accept notions of historically, and contextually situated, multiple truths or realities.

Gray (2004) describes the 'conceptual framework' as a combination of the ontological perspective and subsequent epistemological assumptions which define a theory of knowledge. Development of the conceptual framework is suggested to provide 'conceptual clarity' and drive the process of methodological decision-making in research. The conceptual framework of a given piece of research can be located within the paradigm structure defined by its philosophical doctrine.

To illustrate the process by which the researcher gained conceptual clarity, diagrammatical representation of the conceptual framework for this research is presented below in Figure 2. Following this a description of the theory of knowledge used in this research is presented.



*Figure 2. Conceptual framework for this research*

### **3.3 Ontological perspective**

Raskin (2002) argues that terms like constructionism and constructivism have been used inconsistently in ways that often make them appear to defy distinction. In a discussion of the presence of these terms in social scientific research, Young and Collin (2004) make a distinction between the philosophical doctrines of these two ontologies in their epistemology. Social constructionism locates reality as a product of social interaction and negotiation between relevant groups and therefore sustained by social processes. Constructivism contrast with this doctrine, in that it locates reality as a product of individual mental construction. This research was concerned with the individual constructions of students with LD on their PCAR and focused centrally on

exploring the social process mediating the integration of meaning (efficacy information) into pre-existing schemes (efficacy beliefs) and/ or the environment (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Therefore, the researcher adopted a constructivist ontology.

### **3.3.1 Constructivism**

Constructivist ontology can be understood as a spectrum of perspectives each posing a variation on the interaction between human society and (the rest of) nature (van den Belt, 2003). Moderate constructivism acknowledges that individual constructions take place within a systematic relationship to the external world. This variation rests on the principle of a pre-existing but evolving reality which is construed and altered within individual constructions. Radical Constructivism acknowledges the scientific co-production in the relationship between nature and society. From this view, value-laden scientific practices define reality by creating order out of disorder. This view is underpinned by the premise that the actual construction of scientific research (conceptual framework) is deeply engaged in the material world and therefore the production of knowledge cultivated in relation to it. Social constructivism offers a perspective which recognises that influences on individual construction are derived from and preceded by social relationships. This perspective emphasises dualism and locates the production of knowledge within meaning relations generated through social interaction.

The current research was concerned with the experience of the PCAR from the perspective of the student at the centre of this process therefore an ontology which located the production of knowledge in the individual construction was necessary. However, the critical review of the literature (see chapter 2) indicated that complex social interactions occurring within the PCAR have some influence on the constructions of the focal person but that there is variation in these constructions and not a systematic relationship. The social constructivist ontology assumes that the nature of reality is within constructions of meaning which are influenced by the relationships in interactions. This research sought to explore these constructions of meaning from the perspective of the student at the centre of the interaction (PCAR). Therefore, the research adopted a social constructivist ontology.

### **3.4 Epistemological assumptions**

In line with the ontological perspective of this research, the nature of reality is constructed within the meaning relationships between actors interacting. From this view, the epistemological question of the nature of the relationship between the student and the researcher, must be clarified. In line with the social constructivist ontology, the relationship is transactional and subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). By this I mean that what knowledge is created through the relational interaction between the student and the researcher. From this view, the subjective constructions of the student and that of the researcher are interactively linked, cultivating a more informed understanding of the phenomenon of investigation. These subjective constructions are intertwined with, derived from and preceded by the social relationships of each actor. These assumptions frame the investigative process of research as an exploration of multiple and sometimes conflicting social realities which are apprehendable through dialectical discourse. The aims of this research were to reveal these constructions from the perspective of the student. Therefore, the subjective nature of the researcher in the production of knowledge needed to be considered.

#### **3.4.1 Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person perspective. This transcendental philosophy posits that what exists through consciousness, through intuition or reason, are knowledge producing (Descartes, 1977). From this view, the constructions of students with LD conform to their experiences of objects and therefore to understand the PCAR we can only come to know these truths from the subjective source of those experiencing it.

However, constructivist epistemology assumes the co-production of knowledge (see above) due to the transactional nature of interaction. Husserl (1970) asserts that research which claims to be phenomenological must satisfy the principle of freedom from suppositions. This notion of 'freedom' is developed through engagement in the 'phenomenological epoché' (bracketing) which he describes as enabling the researcher to:

*“ ...completely shut[s me] off from any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being.”*

(Husserl, 1983)

This means that through bracketing the researcher is able to put to one side their judgements and presuppositions of their subjective constructions; including their prior experience, their interpretations, and their knowledge of scholarly and scientific views of the phenomenon (Ashworth, 1996). Although this notion is widely accepted as the fundamental basis of the phenomenological tradition, the possibility and value placed upon this practice varies across researchers conducting research within the epoché (King, Finlay, Ashworth, Smith, Langdridge & Butt, 2008).

In developing the conceptual framework of this research, two phenomenological traditions were reviewed for congruence to ontological perspective. Moustakas (1994) describes ‘transcendental phenomenology’ as producing a descriptive account of the essential features of the phenomenon of study participants lifeworld. This approach is distinct in its claim for the researcher to fully bracket their subjective constructs. The researcher resists any emphasis on interpretation through acknowledgement and bracketing. From this approach, the concept of transcendence draws on this practice of bracketing and produces a fresh perspective of the phenomenon.

van Manen (1990) describes ‘hermeneutical phenomenology’ which focuses on the interpretation of lived experience. This tradition contrasts with transcendence in its acceptance of the subjectivity of the researcher. From this tradition, knowledge is an interpretation of the subjective constructions of the person experiencing the phenomenon. In order to come to know an object of experience, the researcher acknowledges their embedded and subjective nature in the production of knowledge and discloses this in order to bracket the interpretation of the knowledge produced. van Manen (1990) argues that a phenomenological approach which attempts to bracket the meanings and assumptions of the researcher is unobtainable as the interpretations of data

always incorporate the socially constructive nature of the researcher's own assumptions.

The assumptions of 'hermeneutical phenomenology' were viewed as the most appropriate approach to the current research due to the professional role and functions of the researcher (see 1.7). Heidegger (1962) posits that any attempt to conduct a phenomenology necessitates interpretation as a basic structure of our being in the world. The structures and relational meanings of the researcher were closely intertwined with larger systems interacting with the phenomenon of study. Therefore, a 'hermeneutical phenomenology' formed the epistemological approach to this study.

### **3.3.2 Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics is described as the theory of interpretation (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Heidegger (1962) made links between phenomenology and hermeneutics in that the phenomenological of examining something which may be latent or disguised concern is apprehendable through hermeneutics which challenge phenomena as it appears on the surface. Gadamer, (1976) suggested that the phenomenological concern is achievable through a circle in which scientific understanding or illumination occurs. In line with the ethical considerations of this research, hermeneutics provide a method for the researcher to bracket their preconceptions.

### **3.5 Qualitative method**

Qualitative research methods are valuable in providing rich descriptions of complex phenomena. They refer to open-ended, inductive research methodologies that are concerned with the exploration of meanings (Kidder & Fine, 1987). These methods use broad questions which explore and make sense of phenomena; allowing flexibility for the researchers to reflect on their own constructions (Robson, 2002).

This research was concerned with the phenomenological, therefore the use of a method which would determine pre-structured variables were incongruent. The epistemological assumptions of this research required the researcher to employ methods that would allow transactional social interaction between the

student and the researcher in order to generate knowledge of the meaning of relationships and subsequent constructions of the student.

### **3.5.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Driven by the epistemology of the current research, the approach to data analysis needed to consider the dynamic of preconceptions present in the interaction between the student and the researcher. Smith & Osborn (2003) describe the 'double hermeneutic' in the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This practice offers an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007) where the researcher is making sense of the participant who is making sense of the phenomenon of study (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This idea emphasises the subjective nature of the researcher within the interaction occurring through the research process and values the researchers' role in the production of knowledge through engagement with the practice of bracketing through critical reflexivity (Smith, 2010). This value is contributed to the achievement of the research aims in its commitment to the phenomenological (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

### **3.5.2 Idiography**

Idiography is concerned with the particular- and has major influences on IPA in its commitment to focus on and grasp the meaning of something for a given person (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The purpose of the research was exploratory and aimed to develop a more informed understanding of the experience of the PCAR process from the perspective of the student themselves. Idiography looks to establish a way of cautiously generalising *from* the particular through an exploration of every single case before producing any general statements (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

### **3.5.3 Stages of IPA used in this research**

The data analysis technique was derived from the interpretation of several publications which offer a guide to its use. The technique aims to provide evidence of the participants' making sense of phenomena under investigation, while at the same time, document the researchers' sense making (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Therefore, the researcher engages in a process of

phenomenological analysis and interprets the data through their own constructs and theories of knowledge.

The analysis technique used in this study (see table 5) followed seven stages of the IPA process as described, reviewed and critiqued within the literature (Larkin & Thompson, 2011); (Smith, 2011); (Smith & Osborn, 2003); (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009); (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

*Table 5. Stages of IPA used for data analysis*

Stage	What this involved
Familiarising with data	The researcher reads the transcript while listening to the recording of interview. The researcher makes notes focused on what was being discussed and the interpersonal elements of the interpersonal elements of the discussion.
Open-coding and sympathetic reading	Re-reading transcripts and identifying new and different reflections to initial notes Noting own responses and emotional reactions toward the text
Bracketing	Engaging in critical reflection based on previous stages of the analysis. Focused on; judgements, prior experience, their interpretations, and their knowledge of scholarly and scientific views of the phenomenon (Ashworth, 1996)
Phenomenological coding	Re-reading transcripts searching for objects of concern (things that matter to participants) connections to the experiential claim (how participants give meaning to and make sense of these objects)
Emergent themes	Categorising clusters of meaning connected to the object of attention by looking for convergence and divergence between and within accounts
Interpretative analysis	Synthesis of emergent themes and open-coding interpreted through a psychological lens. Connections drawn between patterns which participants may be unwilling or unable to acknowledge themselves to offer a



	complete understanding of the participants lived experience. Critical reflection on the empathetic understanding generated from the interpretation.
Super-ordinate themes	These themes were then transformed into a narrative account. Verbatim extracts, from each participant, was presented within the narrative to support the account.
Narrative account	Interpretation of Superordinate themes- relating parts to the whole
Interrogation	Situating the interpretation within the context

### 3.6 Research Participants

The phenomenological commitment requires an exploration of lived experience. The ontological perspective of this research drives an idiographic approach to data analysis. Therefore, any attempt to produce knowledge of this phenomenon requires the exploration of constructs and their meaning from the individual experiencing those events. The sampling method used in this research was selected in order to recruit participants based on their ability to supply all of the information needed for a comprehensive analysis of the experience of the PCAR for students with LD (Yardley, 2000). A purposive sampling method was chosen for the requirement of participant selection according to a criterion of relevance to the research questions. Purposive sampling provides the researcher with an approach to the recruitment of a homogeneous sample “to the extent that they share the experience of a particular event” (Willig, 2012 p. 61). This was chosen to achieve the aims of this research by promoting cautious transferability of the findings due to the recruitment of an experientially homogenous group.

Through this method a total of 5 participants were included in the collection of for this study (see table 8). A small sample is recommended for use of IPA as it enables the analysis to benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, pp. 51). Smith (2011) suggests that rigorous research utilising IPA with a sample of this size should provide extracts from half the sample as evidence of the breadth and depth of each theme. In

order to achieve rigor, the researcher adopted three layers of criteria for inclusion in the participant group. These criteria took into account both the homogeneity of participant experience and also of the event of experience. The first criteria took into consideration the PCP strategy in use in the context of the research (see 1.5) and the school systems who espoused to implement this. The researcher used their role and function to explore and approach the schools who indicated that they were implementing this approach. The second criteria considered the construct of LD within the context of the research. At a local level, a curriculum-based assessment tool operated on the basis of the traditional discourse of LD (see 1.6). Due to the prevalence of this construct in the educational and social context, these criteria were used as a means of developing homogeneity within the sample. The final criteria related to the focus of PfA in the current research. As a result of this participants were selected based on their Key Stage of education. This is summarised in table 6:

*Table 6. Inclusion criteria used to develop a homogenous sample*

Details of inclusion criteria	Other criteria used
Confirmation from the school that the student experienced a PCAR	
Records indicate that the student has received a diagnosis of learning disability	Curriculum assessment indicates that the student is achieving at National Curriculum level 1a in all core subjects
Currently in Key Stage 4 of their education	
Student confirms that they have attended their PCAR	

Issues arise when attempting to select a homogenous sample including; ‘how participants vary from one another?’ and ‘whether this variation can be contained to enable analysis of the phenomena?’ (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The criteria outlined above were used with the aim of creating a homogenous group of experiences of a dominant social discourse of LD and of the espoused model of the PCAR. This was done to enable the researcher to examine the detail in variability of the reflections within the group which would arise from the individual’s experiential meaning.

### **3.7 Semi-structured interviews**

Qualitative research methods refer to open-ended, inductive research methodologies that are concerned with the exploration of meanings (Kidder & Fine, 1987). Although these methods were reviewed as congruent with epistemological assumptions of the research, the researcher was aware of the need to consider the use of common strategies employed by this approach in research concerning the perspectives of people with LD. As described in the Introduction chapter the developmental nature of LD is associated with differences which affect an individual's intellect (MENCAP, 2016). Therefore, strategies for gathering data were reviewed with consideration of how adjustments to the technique could be made that would support the researchers' own understanding of participant accounts.

Initially, the researcher explored some of the literature surrounding this topic which highlighted four areas;

- Inarticulateness
- Unresponsiveness to open questioning
- Difficulty with generalising and abstraction
- Difficulty with time perception

(Booth & Booth, 1996); (Clark, Lhussier, Minto, Gibb & Perini, 2005).

Lewis, Newton & Vials (2008) suggest that consideration of the level of structure in the techniques used may support the researcher in their approach to eliciting narratives. This approach was consistent with the use of structured interviewing techniques, although, the use of closed questioning in this approach offered limitations. In consideration of the epistemological assumptions of this research it was felt that this approach would not enable participants to challenge the researcher's assumptions about the meaning of the phenomenon (Willig, 2008). Therefore, this strategy was not employed in its entirety for this research.

Goodley (1998) highlights through his research that assumptions made about people with learning disabilities can predetermine how research participants will respond to a particular interviewing style. He suggests that these assumptions may be a more significant constraint on the interview than anything the interviewee brings to the situation. In this research Goodley illustrates that the actions taken in research are based on assumptions and can serve to empower

or disempower the voices of participants whose voices are often marginalised. The research aimed to engage in a dialectic through the interaction occurring within the data collection process.

With these factors taken into consideration, the researcher employed semi-structured approach to the interviewing technique. The flexibility of the use of open and closed questions was aimed to function as triggers to encourage the participant to talk (Willig, 2008) without impinging on participant's ability to challenge the researchers' understanding. It also enabled the researcher to follow-up on particularly interesting responses that emerged during the interview eliciting a complete picture of participants' experiences.

The semi-structured interview was guided by the interview agenda (see appendix 1). A number of open-ended and non-directive questions were developed and were exploratory in nature. Alongside these questions, prompting questions were developed to support the research participants' articulation of their reflections on the PCAR. The agenda also included some more concrete styles of questioning which were developed to trigger yes or no responses. This type of questioning was included to gradually eliminate alternative responses and progressively adapt more open-ended questions (Booth & Booth, 1996) in the event that participants found it difficult to respond. These decisions were made with a view of reducing the opportunity for the researcher leading the interview (Booth & Booth, 1996). Spaces highlighted in the agenda as "participant's own words" (see appendix 1) were included to prompt the researcher to re-word terms and phrases during the course of the interview. This was decided in order to allow the researcher to incorporate the interviewee's own terms and concepts into the question (Willig, 2001). All interviews were audio-tape recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Handwritten notes were not taken during interviews in order to enhance rapport building and assist natural use of non-verbal communication (Mertens, 2005).

### **3.8 Pilot interview**

A pilot interview was conducted with a number of aims underpinned by the concerns of disability research to avoid actively "making difficulties" (Goodley, 1998). Firstly, it provided the researcher with the opportunity to reflect upon the

any challenges to the interviewing process and consider any adjustments to the approach to support my own understanding. It also allowed the opportunity for the researcher to reflect upon the knowledge from the literature regarding interviewing techniques in disability research. Finally, the research was able to consider any changes to the wording of the questions, their abstractness and necessity in the interview agenda.

### **3.8.1 Strategies derived from pilot interview**

During the interview, the researcher noted that providing visual representations of communication (see appendix 2 for example) supported some of the more abstract aspects of the transaction between the student and the researcher to be understood. For example, the researcher could use thought bubbles in drawings to convey questions regarding the student's thoughts and reflections. It was also noted that the use of visual representations of the PCAR enabled the student to make distinctions between temporal accounts. During the pilot interview the student would refer to the drawing of themselves at the beginning and end of the meeting. This provided the opportunity to look for contrasts and changes recounted as the PCAR progressed. One notable element of the interview, made the researcher consider the importance of agreeing a phrase which could be used if the question was not understood or the respondent felt that they did not have a response for this. This was included within the revised interview agenda (see appendix 1).

### **3.8.2 Reviewing the interview agenda**

The structure of the initial interview schedule (see appendix 3) was revised as a result of the pilot. The 'meaning' section was preceded by 'setting the scene'. This was done as it was felt that it allowed the researcher to develop a sense of the adjustments in their approach that would support their own understanding of the discursive transaction. It also aided the researchers' questioning style as the names of members of the meeting could be shared supporting my own visualisation of the students PCAR. This section of the interview agenda included talking about; who attended the meeting and brief details on where and what the room looked like. In addition to this, several questions were revised as a result of the process due to the potential level of difficulty.

### **3.9 Procedures**

This research was conducted by a Trainee Educational Psychologist within the context of the local authority in which they were completing their experiential training. Details of the procedure describes, that follows, will outline how participating schools were recruited and the procedures used to recruit students.

#### **3.9.1 Recruiting schools**

The researcher ascertained data indicating dates of scheduled PCARs by each secondary educational provision within the borough. Each data sheet was initially screened for dates of PCARs which would allow the researcher to interview participants no longer than three weeks after their PCAR. This limited the pool of potential schools to recruit from nineteen to fifteen. Each of the fifteen schools were contacted via email to determine whether they would like to participate in the research. Five schools who displayed interest were contacted by telephone to discuss in more detail the purpose of the study. However, when discussed with a number of schools the researcher was not able to ascertain permission from the Head Teacher in one instance and was not able to ascertain informed consent from parents via the school in the second instance. These factors resulted in the recruitment of three secondary schools who confirmed the use of the PCAR model. Of the three schools, the researcher was allocated 'school visits' as the link Educational Psychologist in Training. The researcher did not have a direct link to the two other participating schools.

Visits were arranged with each school who responded with students who met the criteria. During this visit, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO) were provided with an information sheet for Head teachers (see Appendix 4) and an informed consent form to be signed by the Head teacher (see Appendix 5). Schools were informed of the process of developing a consenting network (see figure 4) and provided with an information sheet for parents (see Appendix 6), an informed consent form for parents (see appendix 7) and copies of both the information sheet (see Appendix 8) and assent form for students (see Appendix 9). A timeline of activities can be seen in table 7 below:

*Table 7. Timeline of activities used in procedure*

Activity	Date	Details	Participant involvement/ time
Informed consent from Headteacher	September 2016-February 2017	Contact and meet with SENCo  Provide information about research and discuss consenting network  Gain informed consent	Meeting with SENCO Approx. 20 minutes
Interviewing participants	September 2016-March 2017	Collect informed consent from school and parents  Discuss and obtain assent from student  Audio record interview participant	Transactional discourse  Up to 45 minutes

### **3.9.2 Recruiting young people**

The sampling strategy was purposive. As discussed in Chapter 1 (see 1.6.) in order to recruit participants, the researcher was required to enter into the paradigm underpinning the traditional constructions of LD. Therefore, the local criteria for demarcating LD from typically functioning was employed. This involved selecting students based on their attainment on school based assessment which informed the guidelines for statutory assessment:

- Year 9: working at Level 1 and up to level 2b in all core subjects
- Year 10+: working at 2a in all core subjects

A total of five participants were recruited from three mainstream secondary schools. All participants had an EHCp therefore placing a statutory requirement on the annual review process. Each school confirmed that the five students had

attended their PCAR and students confirmed this at the beginning of the interview. Participants experienced the PCAR process between the Autumn term 2016 and Spring term 2017. The sample was represented by four females and one male ranging between 13-16 years old. All participants were provided with a pseudonym to protect their anonymity.

Each of the five participants were selected based on the inclusion criteria (see table 6). Four of the five participants were categorised in the local authority database with 'Moderate Learning Disability'. One of the participants were recruited based on the local authority criteria based on school reports of curriculum assessment.

### **3.9.3 Data collection**

The data were collected through semi-structured interview within the participant's school context. Four of the five participant interviews were carried out in the room which the PCAR was originally held. One of the interviews were held in the office of the SENCO who supported the recruitment of this participants'. Each of the participants were briefed by the SENCO at their school about the research and asked for their interest in participation. On the day of the interviews, the researcher was introduced to the participants by the SENCO before entering the room in which the interview took place. The researcher introduced themselves before disclosing their trainee status and professional role to the participants. Participants were asked if they knew of the EP role and were provided with a description of the activities which EP engage in with secondary schools. The researcher then read through the participant information sheet (see appendix 8) before going through the assent form with the participant. The audio recording devices were then set to record and the participant was made aware of this before any questions were asked.

Participants were asked some introductory questions (see appendix 1) before the questions regarding the phenomenon were asked. Semi-structured interviews lasted between 20-45 minutes. The interview agenda (see appendix 1) was used to guide the interview but did not dictate its exact course. Questions were adapted to responses provided and interesting areas were probed throughout. Audio recorded data was transcribed verbatim by the



researcher. This involved listening to the recording and speaking into a device with voice recognition software provided by a word processor.

#### **3.9.4 Role of the researcher**

In line with the constructivist epistemology of this research the researcher recognises that their own constructions and relational meanings cultivated the responses occurring during the interaction. Attempts were made, by the researcher, to employ a conceptually sound methodological approach to the research process with the view of mediating the researchers' own ability to understand and appreciate the constructions of students with LD. However, it is likely that these constructions permeate the entire research process and therefore the researcher understands the subjectivity of their role. This relates to the researchers' interaction with the participant during the interview and also in the process of analysis by augmenting experience rather than simply reflecting it (Beer, 1997).

#### **3.9.5 Critical reflexivity**

The conceptual framework of this research acknowledges that the researcher was a central figure in the knowledge produced as a result of this investigation; influencing not only the conceptual approach to this investigation but also imposing preconceptions onto the meaning and subsequent interpretation of the findings. The data analysis technique used in this study requires the researcher to engage in a process of bracketing through critical reflexivity. Reflexivity differs from 'reflection' in that it taps into a more immediate, continuing, dynamic, and subjective self-awareness (Finlay, 2009) by requiring the researcher to have an ongoing conversation about the experience while simultaneously experiencing it (Hertz, 1997). In phenomenological based research, the hermeneutical circle provides the basis for a dialectical process in which the constructs of the researcher can become more informed in their close reading of the text. The purpose of critical reflexivity in the current research is to both critically examine and disclose the preconceptions of the researcher and provide an account of the fusion of horizons (perceptions) which occurred in the process of this research. In line with the ontological assumptions of this research, reflexivity would require an examination of the relational meaning which occurred during this process to provide clarity to the ways in which these

illuminations were produced. An initial reflexive account is presented in this chapter to provide an account of the researcher's preconceptions prior to engaging in any activity with the research participants (see Box 1). Accounts of critical reflexivity will be presented in Chapter 4 where an account of the findings are presented.

### *Box 1. Pre-research critical reflexivity*

The conception of this research was motivated by two concerns. Firstly, the introduction of recent legislative changes and the subsequent Code emphasised the use of PCA to educational practices. I felt that my values connected with the humanistic principles underpinning this approach in relation to the way that educational professionals support children and young people in their practice. This encouraged me to read and understand further how this approach offered a way of working. Having done so it was unclear to me what about this approach was effective and why it was advocated for use at national policy level.

The second motivator for this research came from my concerns for the future lives of my younger siblings who both have LDs. A conversation with my younger sibling about her hopes for the future and her plans to achieve drew further concern as she appeared confused and more anxious in this response than I had perceived her to be in other conversations with me. These motivators skewed my initial conception of research in that I felt drawn to the idea of investigating the mechanisms and processes that contributed to a successful PCAR. This, for me, was conceived with the aim of providing an account of how we, as professionals, could 'do things better'.

Having engaged in a preliminary review of the literature, I was able to critically examine my assumptions and how this impinged on how I located the ontological perspective of the research. For me these assumptions initially skewed the research in that I attempted to fit exploratory purposes into an explanatory framework. Again, this was driven by my initial motivation to provide an account of how to 'do things better'. The research was skewed to the current direction during the writing of the proposal where I encountered Harding and Gantley (1998) positions relating to common sense assumptions. This made me reconsider the decision-making process by relocating the participant as central to the research process.

Brinkman & Kvale (2008) argue that qualitative research is saturated with ethical issues due to the relational and interactional nature of the method. They posit that it is this approach to research that affects researchers and

participants, and the knowledge produced through qualitative research affects our understanding of the phenomenon. From this point of view, ethical issues arise from the very beginning of the research and continue to interact with the process of decision making and the actions of the researcher throughout the data collection and analysis. They also bear relevance on the process of dissemination of the research findings.

### **3.10 Ethical issues**

The epistemological nature of this research presents ethical issues which must be considered in this report. Several processes of ethical consideration were taken to ensure that the current research was conducted, reported and disseminated in an ethically sound way. Each area of consideration is presented below with an account of the ways in which the researcher addressed these issues.

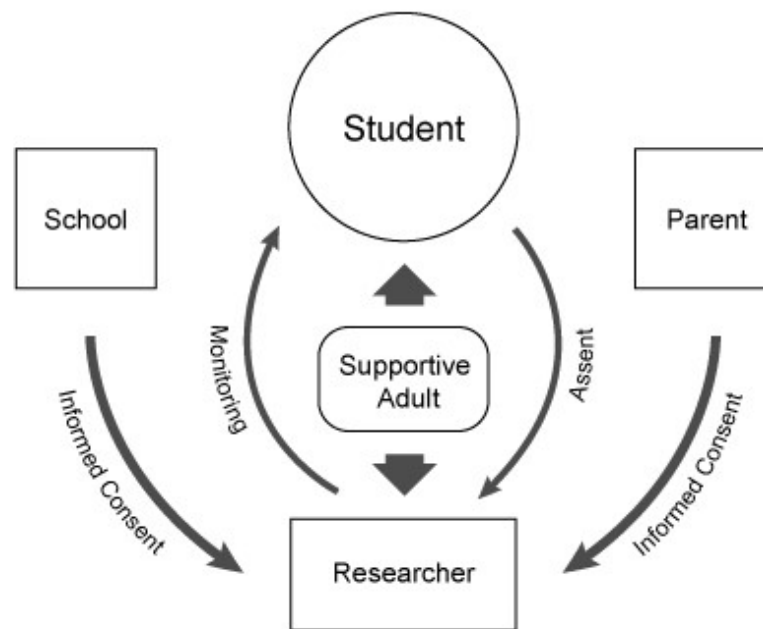
#### **3.10.1 Protection from harm**

To ensure that the physical and psychological wellbeing of participants were addressed, a proposal of this research and risk assessment were designed in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Conduct followed by EPs (HCPC, 2016) and the (University of East London, 2013) A research proposal was submitted to both the University of East London Research Ethics Committee (see appendix 10) and the Local Authority's Research Governance Panel for scrutiny against the Research Governance Framework. Both scrutiny panels provided approval for this research.

#### **3.10.2 Informed consent**

Informed consent was sought from three sources to create a 'consenting network' (see figure 3). The aim of this approach to consent was to establish a respectful relationship with research participants as recommended when working with people with LD (DoH, 2001a). Informed consent was obtained initially from the Headteacher schools (see appendix 5) and from parents (see appendix 7). Both Head teacher(s) and parents were provided with information sheets (see appendices 4 and 6 respectively) which detailed the nature of the study and contained explicit information regarding;

the confidential storage of any data obtained, how it will be anonymised and destroyed upon completion and the rights all participants have to withdraw from research at any time (Robson, 2002).



*Figure 3. Illustration of the consent network*

In order to facilitate a respectful relationship with participants, the researcher engaged in a dialogue structured around the information sheet (see appendix 8) to explore participants' understanding of the aims of the research and their role within it (BPS, 2014). Before commencing the interview, participants were provided with a copy of the information sheet and invited to complete an assent form (see appendix 9). This was carried out in the presence of a school-based supportive adult deemed well-placed to appreciate the participant's reaction (BPS, 2014).

The researcher also agreed a method of communicating that the participant would like to have a break during the interview. The researcher also monitored participant assent by; paying sensitive attention to any signs, verbal or non-verbal, which could have suggested that they were not wholly willing to continue with the data collection (BPS, 2014).

### **3.10.3 Anonymity and confidentiality**

This research is particularly concerned with the exploration of details of individual's life events which raised particular issues for the anonymity and confidentiality of participating students. Information identifying the borough in which the research was conducted in, the participant's names and the school(s) they attend were removed from the data at transcription. The researcher took care to introduce modifications to participant names and made adjustments to the transcripts to prevent identification of others discussed during interview. Pseudonyms were allocated to participants prior to the analysis of transcripts which was communicated to the consenting network through the information sheets.

### **3.10.4 Risk**

Assessment of the research proposal deemed the risk of emotional, physical or psychological harm of the researcher to be low. Risk of harm to research participants was also assessed (see appendix 11). Throughout the research process, the researcher was aware of their professional duty of care towards participants, and the process of making referrals to appropriate authorities if necessary (HCPC, 2012). Regular supervision was accessed from the Director of Studies who monitored and supported the management of any ethical issues which arose prior to and throughout the research process.

### **3.10.5 Data protection**

Interviews were digitally audio recorded, using two devices simultaneously – a tablet computer and a smartphone – to minimise the chance of a catastrophic loss of data. Both devices were password protected and stored securely by the researcher to guarantee the recordings remained confidential between interviewer, participant and supportive adult. Post-transcription the audio recordings of interview data on the smartphone were destroyed. Recordings on the tablet computer were retained, stored securely following guidance from the Director of Studies. All recorded data is to be destroyed within an estimated period of six months following the completion of the study.

### **3.10.6 Right to withdraw**

Head teachers and parents were provided with information sheets detailing their right to withdraw their consent for the research (see appendices 4 and 6). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw in the presence of a member of staff within the participating schools. Participants were also reminded of this right before the start of the interview process. Participating schools and consenting parents were informed that during the data gathering phase they were free to withdraw or modify their consent and request their data be removed from the research in line with the stated time limits available on information sheets (see Appendices 4 and 6).

### **3.11 Reviewing quality in qualitative research**

In line with the criteria used to evaluate reports included in the critical review, the guidelines employed by this research set to address the issues of validity and quality. The guidelines set out in Elliot, Fischer & Rennie (1999) were selected as they were felt to take a “more sophisticated and pluralistic stance” (Smith *et al.*, 2010, p.179) and are recommended for use with research employing IPA. In addition to this, the identified themes and analyses were guided by Stiles’ (1999) criteria for ‘reflexive validity’ to ensure the credibility of the final account. A description of how this research was guided by these criteria will be outlined in the sections that follow.

#### **3.11.1 Evolving guidelines**

Elliot, Fischer & Rennie (1999) outline seven guidelines which are especially pertinent to quality in qualitative research. These guidelines are suggested to function to legitimise qualitative research, foster valid scientific review and provide a basis in which to reflect upon at both the design and writing stages. Each of the seven criteria for quality are discussed below in the following order;

1. Owning one’s perspective
2. Situating the sample
3. Grounding in examples
4. Providing credibility checks
5. Coherence
6. Accomplishing specific research tasks
7. Resonating with readers

The first guideline guides the researcher to specify their theoretical orientation which was clarified in Chapter 2 (see 2.6) and personal anticipations prior to and throughout the research process (see 1.7 and Boxes 1-4). This hermeneutic process enabled the researcher to explore their own constructions as they became apparent during the research process. This criterion was important in improving the validity of the what emerged through the data analysis process as it is in line with the ontological notion of relativist research and the particular assumptions of a social constructivist ontology. Given that the aims of the research included a commitment to the phenomenological, critical reflexivity enables the reader to judge the findings relative to the perspective of the researcher.

The sample was situated as so far as the researcher felt the report maintained anonymity and confidentiality. This is presented in the current chapter (see 3.6; 3.9.2) and which were deemed relevant to the phenomenon of study. This also included a description of the social discourses of LD and the national and local discourse in which the participants were situated (see Chapter 1; 1.6, 1.2.1 and 1.5 respectively).

A detailed description of the iterative process involved in the data analysis is provided in Chapter 4 and this is grounded in examples of extracts from each of the data sets. This aimed to illustrate both the analytic procedures used in the study and document the understanding developed by the researcher in light of them. The researcher also provided excerpts of data under each of the Superordinate themes found from the IPA (see 4.7).

The research report was read by the Director of Studies supervising this research. Subsequent feedback and adjustments were made to the entire report. The researcher's presentation of findings was guided by the fourth guideline. The research was driven by three research questions (see 2.7) and the researcher address each of these questions sequentially in Chapter 5). The research report was also examined through Viva in which two experienced Educational Psychologists looked over the analysis and supporting data. Corrections and elaborations to the original analysis were suggested; including the labelling of Superordinate themes and clarity within the Discussion section.



The criterion of coherence is described as the representation of the understanding derived from the data analysis in a way which provides an underlying structure for the phenomenon. The researcher presented a conceptual model derived from the theoretical review (see figure 1.) and structured the discussion of the Superordinate themes found in the current research around this understanding.

The accomplishment of specific research tasks were guided by the research aims presented in chapter 2. The researcher followed the recommendations for achieving rigour in research utilising IPA. This was achieved by ensuring that extracts from half of the sample constituted evidence of a super-ordinate theme as suggested by Smith (2007). Guba and Lincoln (1994) outline the aims of constructivist methodology. In producing a report of research conducted within this perspective, the inquiry aim focuses on understanding and reconstructing understanding. Due to the paucity of research in this particular area, this report provides a more informed reconstruction through documenting vicarious experience. The constructions of students with LD are presented in relation to a lived experience in which there was no evidence or truth previously.

Finally, the researcher sought feedback from examiners during their Viva in order to ascertain whether the research report stimulated resonance. In this situation, one examiner shared that they understood how Positioning theory could be involved in the PCAR process. The other examiner shared that they disagreed with some of the interpretation. From this view, the researcher feels that the interrogative account provided a narrative in which the reader could engage in a dialectic potentially challenging their previous constructions of this phenomenon.

### **3.11.2 Reflexive validity**

Reflexive validity is a process of evaluating how intersubjective elements influence data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002). This was felt to be an important guideline to reflect upon due to the epistemological assumptions of this research. Stiles (1999) suggests that criteria for evaluating the validity of interpretations in qualitative investigations can be cross classified according to two levels to impact. The first focuses on who the interpretation's impact is on;

the reader, the participants or on the investigator. The second focuses on whether the impact of interpretation is one of simple fit or one that creates change or growth in understanding.

In this stage of the researcher is able to assess the impact of the research on themselves. This is achieved in this report, and presented in boxes, through a short narrative about the process of critical reflexivity. Chapter 4 presents an account of the analysis in which the researcher has attempted to provide a transparent account of the sympathetic and empathetic reading of data. This was to provide transparency for the reader and allow the consideration of the resultant understanding derived from the researcher's interpretation. This was done in order to allow readers to assess the impact of the findings on their own constructions.

The social constructivist epistemology would indicate that the dialectical process which occurred as a result of the data collection could have provided an opportunity for the process of the research to impact on participants. The subsequent feedback sheets (see appendix 12) were also aimed at providing an impact on participants in this study. The findings of this study revealed a new perspective on and theoretical and conceptual understanding of the PCAR process. This perspective was shared through accessible feedback sheets with those who participated in the research (see appendices 13 and 14).

### **3.12 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the researchers' process used to develop conceptual clarity methodological construction of the current research. It provided justifications for the decision made underpinned by the research paradigm in which it was conceived. A description of the data analysis techniques were outlined and the details of the activities involved in recruitment and procedure were provided. Finally, issues of ethical research and quality in qualitative research were provided. The following chapter will move to an illustrative account of the process of data analysis. Critical reflexivity is provided within this account.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1 Chapter overview**

The following chapter presents a narrative account of the analytical process used in this research. It will begin with an illustrative account of each phase of the IPA used in this research (see table 5) before presenting the super-ordinate themes found in this study. The chapter ends with a summary of the super-ordinate themes which are then discussed in the final chapter of this report.

### **4.2 Initial stage of analysis**

Before engaging in this stage of IPA (outlined in the Method Chapter), the researcher transcribed each audio recorded interview themselves (see appendix 13). During this phase, the researcher paused the recording several times to adjust the recognised text if there were inaccuracies typed.

#### **4.2.1 Open-coding and note-making**

In the first stage of analysis, the researcher read the transcribed interviews while listening to the audio recording. In this stage, the researcher paused the recording at times to; make notes, recall the atmosphere of the interview and visualise the setting and the young person. Larkin & Thompson (2012) suggest this approach to the initial stage of analysis allows the researcher to begin to reflect on their own preconceptions by working through the reading with vulnerability- noticing participant's ideas which challenge presumptions.

Two sets of notes were made during this process. These notes focused on what was actually being discussed during the interview and on the reflections of the interpersonal factors between the interviewer and interviewee throughout each interview. Adjustments were also made to the body of the original transcript to include notes reflecting: emotional state, gestures, repetitions of words and sentences, new word additions to repeated sentences, and pauses used to communicate by both the interviewer and interviewee. This initial stage also allowed the researcher to make any further corrections to the transcripts which were inaccurately recorded when transcribed.

This stage is illustrated in the analysis of Cameron's account:

Table 8. Illustration of analysis of interpersonal elements at stage 1

Excerpt from original transcript	Initial notes and responses
<p><i>Interviewer: Ok and why do you think you have to go to your annual review meeting?</i></p> <p><i>Cameron: So I can hear what you're talking about I don't like when people talk behind my back</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: And do you feel that meeting means that people do not talk behind your back?</i></p> <p><i>Cameron: In a way, yeah</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: How does it stop it from happening?</i></p>	<p>Suspicion</p>
<p><i>Cameron: Because I can go and if I need to say something</i></p>	<p>Control</p> <p>People knowing more</p>
<p><i>Interviewer: And did you have to do that in your last meeting?</i></p> <p><i>Cameron: I didn't really say I don't really like to go to annual reviews but I heard what they were saying and they set targets for me</i></p> <p>(pg. 1: 15-27)</p>	
<p><i>Interviewer: Yes that's true but I'm sure you did well it sounds like you tried really hard. And you're saying that your meeting didn't really change your mind? why do you think it didn't?</i></p> <p><i>Cameron: That's a trick question</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: Maybe I can say in a different way</i></p> <p><i>Cameron: Yeah</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: Ok, I'm asking about when you went to the meeting and whether talking to people who help you with your learning changed how you felt about school and you think it didn't, so I'm wondering why it didn't change your mind about school</i></p>	<p>Suspicion, distrust,</p> <p>Defensiveness</p>

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*I don't know why it didn't change it [SADNESS]...just I  
don't know  
4:122-134*

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#### 4.2.2 Sympathetic reading

The researcher then re-read each transcript before moving to the next. This was done in an attempt to maintain the bracketing of ideas or interpretation, so as to reduce the influence of one data set on another. By remaining aware of what had come before, it was possible to identify what was new and different in the subsequent transcripts and at the same time find responses which further articulated the extant themes (Smith & Osborne, 2003).

*Table 9. Structure and approach to initial stage of analysis*

Analysis order	Analysis	Details of approach	Analytic process
Mandy Cameron Alice	Initial reading	Reading transcript while listening to audio recording	Adding detail (tone, emotion labels, gesture, pause) to original transcript
			Interpersonal comments
			Reflections on researchers
Esther Helen	Re-reading	Reading transcript	own emotional reaction toward what was being said by the interviewee (sympathetic reading)  Noting any prevalent psychological concepts

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When re-reading each transcript, the researcher noted their own responses and emotional reactions toward what was being recounted by participants. This stage is illustrated by the notes made during the sympathetic reading of Esther's account:

*Table 10. Illustration of analysis of emotional reaction toward participant*

Excerpt from original transcript	Initial notes and responses
<p><i>Interviewer: Ok, and do you... when you say you talk about the things you needed support for</i></p> <p><i>Esther: Yeah</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: what sort of things did you tell people that you needed support with?</i></p> <p><i>Esther: I needed support with my homework and... because I get... I don't know what homework is and things that I've, I've, I haven't done anything like errm...</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: That's alright</i></p>	<p>Compassion brought about by the feeling of not knowing what to do or feeling overwhelmed</p>
<p><i>Esther: Oh, my god, oh my god [Panic]... and, and then, and then, and then... I need help from if I go to library if I need help but you are supposed to go in the VLE because it is more quieter and the library is a bit too loud</i></p> <p><i>(pg. 2: 37-51)</i></p>	<p>Overwhelming sense of relief for Esther. Seemingly brought about by recounting the strategies heard in the meeting</p> <p>Researchers own feelings of distress</p>

Careful attention was also paid to any powerful psychological concepts which were prevalent within the data set. This is illustrated in the initial analysis of Mandy's account:

*Table 11. Sample of analysis of powerful psychological concepts*

Excerpt from original transcript	Initial notes and responses
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*Interviewer: Ok what is different about it let let's think about two things that are different from year 9 to year 8. So, the first thing that is different about year 9 from year 8 is....*

Finding it  
challenging to  
articulate how this  
might be different

*Mandy: Um [ long pause] don't know*

*Interviewer: Is it better? Is it not better? Is it harder, is it not harder?*

*Mandy: It's better*

*Interviewer: Yeah? What is one thing that makes it better?*

*Mandy: Um...*

*Interviewer: There is no right answer*

*Mandy: I don't know*

*(pg. 1: 8-17)*

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*Mandy: Is that big enough?*

*Interviewer: That is fine and shall we write grown up or adult?*

*Mandy: Adult [PAUSE].....wait grown up!*

*Interviewer: So, that's Mandy in year 9 and Mandy as a grown up. So do you think about this Mandy?... One day, being a grown up?*

Constructionism?  
Vocabulary for  
adulthood creating  
construction of self  
as 'grown up'  
Narrative  
Psychology-  
stories?

*Mandy: [NODS]*

*Interviewer: Yeah? And what do you think about that? How do you feel about one day being Mandy the grown up?*

*Mandy: Um, I don't know um...*

*Interviewer: Does it feel happy or not happy*

*Mandy: Happy*

*Interviewer: I think I have an idea. [POINTS TO DRAWING]. Here is your meeting, here is Mandy. In your meeting did you speak about this [POINTS TO DRAWING OF ADULT MANDY] Mandy? The grown-up Mandy?*

*Mandy: I can't remember... I don't know*

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### 4.3 Bracketing

Larkin & Thompson (2011) suggest that, during the first stage of the analysis, open-coding allows the researcher to put their initial ideas down before proceeding with a more systematic and consistent focus in the second stage of analysis. Open-coding can provide a basis for the researcher to begin to consider any influence of their own preconceptions in the process of making sense of the participants sense-making. In line with the epistemological assumptions of this research, attempts to reveal the researchers subjectivity were made to enhance the quality of the research. This involved engagement in critical reflexivity focused on exposing the researchers own judgements, prior experiences, interpretations, and knowledge of scholarly and scientific views of the phenomenon (Ashworth, 1996). This was done to enable the researcher to be better able to focus on the phenomenological. A summary of the critical reflexivity engaged in at this stage can be seen in the box below:

#### *Box 2. Reflexive account following stage 1 of the analysis*

Following the open-coding stage, I searched for the definition of 'dialectic' in order to fully understand the assumptions of phenomenological analysis. From this reading, I reflected upon how reified my own subjective meaning of the PCAR process is. On reflection, a desire to believe that the PCAR influences outcomes may be related to how this approach is discussed within the literature and that this construction has, for me, become social fact. I noted that through the interview my questioning sought evidence of the benefits of this approach in terms of how it has created change in students' experiences. However, this judgement led me to reflect on my own motivations within this research which were two-fold to (as an EP) be contributing to a practice which works and also to have confidence in how this approach could support the experiences of my siblings in adulthood. Having better understood the meaning of the term 'dialectical' made me more open and able to analyse data using more rational judgement and with an openness for my assumptions to be contradicted and withdrawn as 'truth'.



#### 4.4 Phenomenological coding

In the second stage of the data analysis, the researcher re-read each transcript focusing on the ‘objects of concern’ from the perspective of the interviewees worlds and then searched for experiential claims relating to these objects (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This involved focusing in on what mattered and was important to the participants through close reading of the text and then looking for clues that would signal the meaning of what mattered to them. This process can be illustrated by the analysis of Helen and Cameron’s accounts:

*Table 12. Example of Phenomenological coding*

Line by line coding- generating possible interpretations	Excerpt from original transcript	Checking core content
<i>Getting me into lessons (challenging/ tough?)</i>	<i>Helen: I know it was about me like... Getting me into lessons and stuff...er like I understand full story what is going on [...]</i> (pg. 4: 83-85)	Object- fear of going into lessons/school
	<i>Helen: [quick response] it felt me like when all the stress I had in my body I feel I let it out I felt when I said my worries to [SEnCo name] and I felt like I had someone who can help to deal with my problem</i> (pg.8: 199-204)	A place to disclose Share information about yourself? Relief- release
<i>people that’s higher than me</i>	<i>Cameron: I just don’t like to be in the room with so many people-people that’s higher than me</i>	Status?
	<i>Interviewer: And who in that meeting did you have that feeling with?</i>	Inferior? Confidence?
	<i>Cameron: Just everyone there....not from my family though</i>	Shared view

	(pg. 3: 74-78)	with family
	<i>Interviewer: And what about your family? How were they with them? Did they seem to know them a bit more?</i>	members
<i>I think it's the same as me um for them</i>	<i>Cameron: They [PAUSE] I think it's the same as me um for them</i>	
	(pg. 3: 85-87)	

This process was repeated for each transcribed account of each participant and summarised in a table (see appendix 14).

#### 4.4.1 Emergent themes

Once each of the accounts were analysed, the researcher began to look for connections between the objects of concern which participants gave attention to. This involved looking at the 'checking core content' column in the table and clustering the themes based on any connection between them. The researcher often looked back at the excerpt taken from the participant's account to clarify the meaning given to the object of concern.

This stage of the analysis enabled the researcher to move their attention to the powerful phenomenological themes across students' accounts but also provided an opportunity to generate an understanding of how these themes played out for each individual. Emergent themes looked for convergence and divergence across accounts- searching for the ways that participants manifested the same- in particular and different ways. This allowed the researcher to uphold the commitment to the phenomenological requirement of IPA to; 'give voice' to the concerns of participants (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). These themes were cluster in the following way:

*Table 13. Emergent themes*

Knowledge
<i>Discovery of own achievement</i>
<i>Sharing voice</i>
What is going to happen?

<i>Nervousness</i>
<i>Behind back</i>
<i>Status</i>
Hope
<i>They say it will improve</i>
<i>They believe in me</i>
Change and school
<i>The same old school</i>
<i>Difficult experience of school</i>
Grown Up
<i>Emotion</i>

This process involved the researcher thinking about how themselves and others might have dealt with the experiences of the participants. This included exploring the immediate emotional reactions experienced by the researcher when imaging themselves experiencing participants experiences. This stage in the analysis is illustrated by the following:

*Table 14. Example of notes during empathetic reading*

Excerpt from original transcript	Initial notes and responses
<p><i>Interviewer: Ok, wonderful thank you. And what does that meeting mean to you? Because you said that you know it's about you?</i></p> <p><i>Helen: Yeah</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: What is the meaning... what is the purpose of that meeting?</i></p> <p><i>Helen: I didn't mind that they are helping me do like... like giving me... like I was like happy that I was there like they would give me even more support and stuff and when I was... in the start of year 9 I was like I have no idea what I'm doing but then SENCO met with me and said they were the new SENCO. I thought, 'ok, that will</i></p>	<p>The idea of experiencing worry about going to school every day brought about</p>

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<i>be alright now because I was like so scared I didn't want to go inside school or anything but then when I went inside the meeting I was like a bit like you know when I said that I was scared well I got a bit happy and stuff that I was getting more support and that stuff but not that SENCO said they will give me a little bit a little bit support.</i>	feelings of anxiety and nausea
<i>(pg. 5,114-129)</i>	Feelings of relief and hope as the experience could be different

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*Box 3. Critical reflexivity following empathetic reading*

This stage of the analytic process highlighted the concern given to the experiences that matter to young people with LD. Prior experiences, of my own, highlight the gap between my espoused theory and theory-in-practice. Engaging in a phenomenological analysis, brings into question how much weight is given to the 'objects of concern' of young people in interactions with adults. When reflecting on the initial data analysis relative to that of the phenomenological coding, it seems that what matters from the perspective of the young person could be left unacknowledged or unexplored. This raises questions about the systemic nature of interactions and subsequent involvement in ideas about articulation and competence.

#### **4.5 Interpretative analysis**

The researcher then returned to the notes made at the first stage of the analysis (open-coding). These notes were grouped by focus and then synthesised around the emergent themes found in the third stage of the analysis. This was done in order to develop more abstract categories of meaning (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). This analysis focused on the temporal referents (tense) and contradictions in language use within and between the extracts- to explore how students with learning disabilities construct themselves in their experience of the PCAR. This is illustrated by the following synthesis of the emergent theme 'Hope' and the notes from open-coding grouped under 'Belief/hope'.

The Interpretative data analysis focused on generating a psychological perspective of the sense made of this experience by participants. This involved

reflection on the researchers own subjective meaning of this phenomenon coupled with the knowledge of scientific views derived from the critical review (see chapter 2). This stage of analysis generated four new subthemes:

*Table 15. Subthemes generated from Interpretative analysis*

<i>Relief</i>
Belief in me
<i>Change in environment</i>
<i>Relationships</i>

These subthemes were then synthesised with Emergent themes derived from the phenomenological analysis. The researcher blended themes according to the object of attention for each of subthemes emerging from the analysis. This required some adjustments to be made to names of themes in an attempt to capture the essence of meaning in these synthesised themes.

#### **4.7 Superordinate themes**

Five Superordinate themes emerged from the analysis. All but one theme was generated from both the phenomenological and interpretative work. The Superordinate theme 'Relationships' was generated solely from the interpretative analysis. Each Superordinate theme which was found to capture the essence of the experience of the PCAR for students with LD. This is presented below.

##### **4.7.1 My meeting?**

The Super-ordinate theme 'My meeting?' reflected uncertainty across all of the experiential accounts and was generated from three sub-themes. These sub-themes highlighted the graduated way in which participants perceived the meeting to be 'theirs'. Each subtheme is grounded in examples in the form of extracts from the corpus of data.



Figure 4. Superordinate theme 'My meeting?' with subthemes

#### 4.7.1.1 Discovery

The subtheme 'Discovery' spoke of the ways in which participants construed their role in their PCAR. Analysis of participant accounts indicated that the PCAR is perceived as a place where students can discover new information about their own lives:

*Cameron: Hearing that I was allowed to have that made me feel a bit better [...]*

(pg. 4, 118-120)

*Helen: [...] I got a bit happy and stuff that I was getting more support and that stuff but not that [SENCO name] said they will give me a little bit a little bit support*

(pg. 6, 127-30)

Four participants' accounts revealed constructions which spoke of the need to be present at the meeting in order to discover information about their lives:

*Alice: because I think it's best for me to be here because I don't really know my grades and [SENCO name] knows all my grades and stuff*

(pg.2, 39-40)

*Esther: [...] review its because I was like developing well and I don't need all this support or I need the support because erm because I need help for for my subject works because I get struggle.*

(pg. 2, 30-33)

*Alice: Yeah errm, I remember [SENCO name] saying you've done really well with your courseworks and homeworks, you are a very good person, you love to learn about different things and I think that was really cool and the one thing is that I always care about others more than myself [...]*

(pg.3, 71-75)

Analysis indicated that participants also construed the PCAR as a place where members could discover information about themselves.

*Interviewer: [...] can you tell me a little bit about what happened at the meeting? What happened? Do you remember? [...]*

*Mandy: [...] Like what do you need help with to start off like what do you need help with and like um what stuff you can do about*

*Interviewer: Like what stuff you can do about it?*

*Mandy: By yourself*

*Interviewer: By yourself ok*

(pg. 4; 104-105, 112-116)

*Alice: yeah, I told them that I want to make my own fashion line and go round the world selling my business to other business people so I told them that and they were really surprised*

(pg. 11, 260-263)

Alice described the members of the meeting being surprised when she shared her aspirations for the future; suggesting that she thought this was new information for them. Mandy directed her attention to her chance to share information about herself, when the focus was placed on the object of what happened during the meeting.

These accounts illustrate how students with LD construe their perception of their own role and position within their PCAR. Cameron made explicit reference to hierarchical nature of his perception of members of the meeting. He said “*I just don't like to be in a room with so many people that's higher than me*” (pg.5, 74-75) and described his perception of the view from which targets were set:

Cameron: *I didn't really say I don't really like to go to annual reviews but I heard what they were saying and they set targets for me*

Interviewer: *Is there any targets for yourself?*

Cameron: *Um no (pg. 1, 25-29)*

Cameron's use of the words "for me" when talking about constructing targets at the end of the meeting provide clues for the ways in which he perceived his role in constructing reality. The ways in which participants shared their reports of the meeting indicated that there is some uncertainty about the nature of their ownership of the meeting. This is evident in the subtheme 'Discovery' as participants more prevalently describe the interaction from a view of their discovery about their own lives.

#### **4.7.1.2 Apprehension**

Four of the participants' accounts spoke of some initial apprehension about going to the meeting. Some of the accounts reflected participants concerns about what would go on or be said at the meeting:

Cameron: *So, I can hear what you're talking about I don't like when people talk behind my back*

*(pg. 1, 17-18)*

Mandy: *Cold*

Interviewer: *And what if Mary says that she's going to feel a bit cold? What would you say?*

Mandy: *Don't be don't be nervous*

*(pg. 7, 208-211)*

This subtheme provided a conflicting interpretation of students' experiences when compared to how it is conceived governmental literature. That participants report feeling nervous and not knowing what to expect from their PCAR. It is possible that this apprehension could relate to their perception of being the focus of the PCAR meeting. Although, data analysis provided clues as to what this apprehension could likely relate to:



Cameron: *No, they write on their own private papers*

Interviewer: *How did you feel when you were there?*

Cameron: *Like I don't know the word is for it....like unsure*

*(pg. 3, 70-72)*

Mandy: *I know it was about me like... getting me into lessons and stuff  
ER LIKE I understand full story like what's going on and I didn't  
understand because sometimes they might use big chunky words and  
I'm like what does that mean? And that err... I only knew that my mum  
came to talk to SENCo saying that I don't like to come to lessons and err  
the Local authority person was giving me information*

Interviewer: *ok, do you know what information she was giving you?*

Mandy: *not really*

*(pg. 2, 19-31)*

Interviewer: *how do you feel now that you have been to your annual  
review meeting*

Esther: *I felt ok but I needed more support needed more help*

Interviewer: *in the meeting or...?*

Esther: *in the lessons*

*(pg. 7, 153-158)*

Within the transcripts, these accounts signalled that it could also be possible that for students with LD although they report having an understanding of the PCAR being about them, they may be apprehensive about this idea when reflecting on their role and voice within the meeting.

#### **4.7.1.3 Relief**

The interpretation of accounts, which generated this subtheme, reflected participants' emotional experiences of relief. This appeared to relate to the subtheme 'Apprehension' in the way that participants recounted the span of their experience during the meeting. Although participants appeared to

experience apprehension about their PCAR, over time, their experience of their meeting seemed to evoke more desirable emotions:

Helen: *it didn't get worser no it got better but I was still scared and then when I got out I was like phew*

(pg.5, 106-108)

Cameron: *Hearing that I was allowed to have that made me feel a bit better I felt pleased what exams are scary they make you scared*

(pg.6, 118-120)

Helen: *[quick response] it felt really like when all the stress I had in my body I feel like I let it out I felt when I said my worries to [SENCo name] and I felt like I had someone who can help to deal with my problem then I was ok yeah like that will be enough me tell [SENCo name]*

(pg. 9, 200-206)

#### 4.7.5 Relationships

The Superordinate theme 'Relationships' was derived purely from the interpretative analysis. During the synthesis of emergent themes and open-coding, the researcher noted the powerful theoretical pattern reoccurring across the corpus of data. On further analysis of this cluster of excerpts, the researcher referred to previous knowledge derived from the review of the literature and found participant accounts to converge and diverge from the existing conceptualisation of this element of the PCAR process.

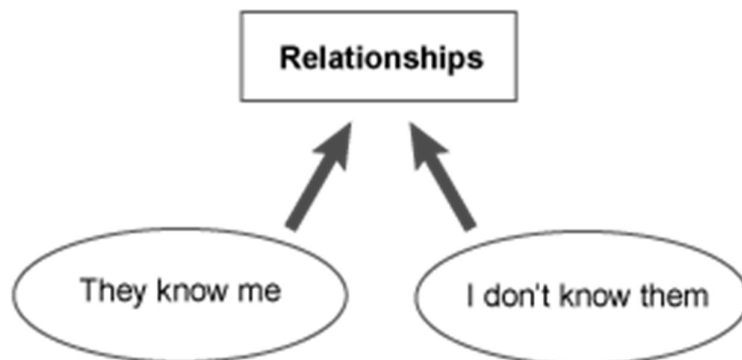


Figure 5. Superordinate theme 'Relationships' with subthemes

#### **4.7.5.1 They know me**

This subtheme reflected what participants reported of their perception of the meaning derived from their interactions with members of the PCAR. The interpretation related to other Superordinate themes in that it focused on the ways in which participants described their sense of relationship to and sense of trust in those at the meeting:

*Alice: I think that it's just that like I know that I'm around people that love me and they love me for who I am and I think that being in that interview... That review is good cos my mum and dad at there and they only know me and my teachers are really supportive*

*(pg.2, 55-59)*

*Helen: [...] in the start of year 9 I was like I have no idea what I'm doing but then SENCO met with me and said they were the new SENCO. I thought, 'ok, that will be alright now*

*(pg. 5, 119-122)*

*Alice: I wouldn't change anything like because my parents are there and SENCO is there and everyone there is that I know and been looking after me since year seven so I don't think that I would change anything*

*(pg. 9, 220-224)*

#### **4.7.5.2 I don't know them**

Conversely, a strong cluster of experiential accounts was found across four of the transcripts. This cluster reflected the lexical omissions in participants' reflections of who was at the meeting:

*Mandy: I think there was more people but I forgot*

*(pg. 4, 101)*

*Interviewer: And what about your family how were they with them did they seem to know them a bit more*

*Cameron: They, I think it's the same as me um for them*

*(pg.3, 85-87)*

Cameron: *Yeah there was loads they told me who they were so I kind of knew them*

*(pg.3 83-84)*

Helen: *Oh! I remember only one I went with my mum and errm SENCo and this other person from [Local Authority name] something like that I can't remember her name*

*(pg.4, 76-79)*

The researchers' interpretation of these omissions considered the assumptions of Husserl (1931; 1983). Husserl posits that as conscious beings our experience is always of something, in its appearing in the world, and specifically for us, as uniquely embodied and situated persons. The intentional act is hence, comprised of a relationship between that which is experienced and the manner in which it is experienced. What was understood of this, related to the concept of 'intentionality' whereby the process occurring within consciousness and the object of attention for that process has meaning within itself. From this interpretation, it is possible that when attention was focused on the members of the PCAR, participant reports were oriented towards those with whom they perceived to have a stronger relationship with. This could indicate that the interactions between and constructions of other members were not as meaningfully experienced.

This interpretation was further illuminated by the account of Esther during this focus in our interview:

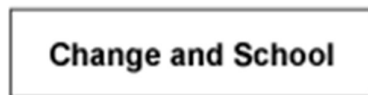
Esther: *It was my Head of Year, it was the Social Workers and the TA support and my Foster Carer*

*(pg. 3, 66-67)*

That Esther used the professional titles of each of the members, when reflecting upon her experience, signalled that her own perception of her relationships with those at the meeting may have reflected the meaning made of her perception of the social relationships between herself and of those who attended.

#### 4.7.3 Change and school

The Superordinate theme 'Change and School' reflected how participants construed the meaning of their PCAR relative to their lived experiences. Across participant accounts, the importance or significance of meaning was interpreted through a focus on temporal referents analysed at a lexical level. This provided clues for the experiential claims of participants:



*Figure 6. Superordinate theme 'Change and school'*

This superordinate theme focused on how students recounted change in their experience at school in relation to their experience of their PCAR. This could be seen in Cameron's account of the role of the meeting in reconstructing his experience of examinations. This revealed itself through analysis of how participants construed their experiences in time. Clues for evidence of these claims were analysed through participants use of verb tense used to describe experiences prior to during and following the PCAR:

*Cameron: I have been here for a long time and there have been ups and downs but now it is going goods I think that I can get help I got like help when I was doing my exam to read and more time [...] hearing that I was allowed to have that made me feel a bit better. I felt pleased- what exams aren't scary they make you scared*

*(pg. 109-112, 119-121)*

Cameron's use of the verb 'been' references the past in the beginning of his account. He then describes how things are going good and references this to his present experience using the adverb 'now'. An indication of the significance of the PCAR in this perception of change reveals itself in the use of the word 'hearing'. This indicates that Cameron is referring to the present action and what is being recounted at that moment is his experience of his PCAR.

This can also be seen in the way that Alice constructs change in her feelings relative to the time references related to her experience of her PCAR:

Alice: *errrm... in that meeting... you know like further and further maths and stuff and how I feel? It was really bad and stuff? Now I feel I could do maths every single day I feel more confident like I can put my hands up no matter what and like I feel really confident knowing that I even though I am bad at maths I still can try and there is a possibility that I can get a good grade*

(pg. 4. 115-121)

These accounts indicate that participants make meaning of their PCAR meeting by relating their experiences to changes that are associated with this it over time.

#### 4.7.4 Preparing for Adulthood

'Preparing for Adulthood' was formed of two subthemes; 'Age-referents' and 'Anxiety'.

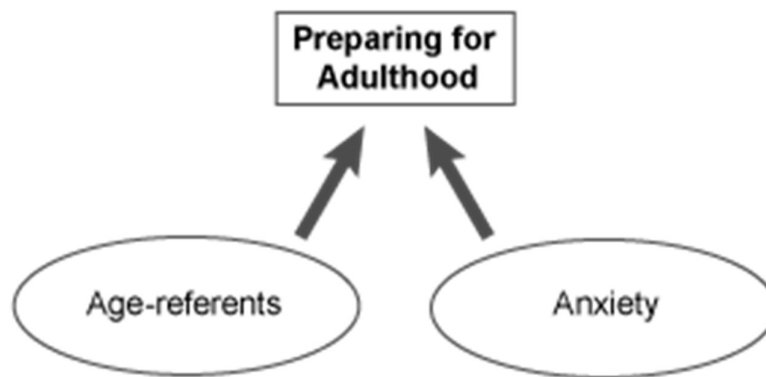


Figure 7. Superordinate theme 'Preparing for Adulthood' with subthemes

##### 4.7.4.1 Age-referents

The interpretative analysis situated this subtheme within the current context with reference to the PfA strategy. The researchers' interpretation of this subtheme indicated that participants made sense of their experiences in ways that involved a shift in the how they construed themselves within their world. This was found across all of the data sets:

Mandy: *Adult... wait grown up!*

(pg.9, 295)

Helen: *so that's why I am always thinking about umm that's going to be my job*

(pg.10, 240-242)

Cameron: *Because school is this school, but when you get your GCSEs it it's becomes life- because you need your GCSEs for jobs*

(pg.2, 49-51)

Participants' accounts revealed their construction of social age-referents. This revealed itself in the ways in which they made distinctions through language to understand and locate themselves relative to references of age. They also seemed to use the experience of the PCAR as a tool to make meaning of this construction:

Alice: *yeah cos after year 11 after you finish your exams you start going to a bit more adulthood and you know you're like a young person now and you start doing things that are like that you want to do in your own personal life and I feel like doing that the review made me feel like yeah I'm growing up but yeah there are some opportunities I can reach out for*

(pg.6, 139-145)

These occurrences signalled that participants derived some meaning of how they construe themselves in relation to their experience. Esther identified *who* these meetings are for when recounting her experience. In this way, she defined or located her own self in terms of her stage in life relative to others:

Interviewer: *ok and do you know what that meeting is for? What is it for?*

Esther: *For young people*

(pg. 1, 18-20)

Esther could have said young adults, children or a range of other words reflecting the contextual language used to describe the school-aged population. This choice might reflect the interaction between herself and the members of the meeting and subsequently the members' constructions of age-referents.

#### 4.7.4.2 Anxiety

This subtheme reflected the emotional responses of participants when intentionality was focused on their perceptions of their future. Four participant accounts contributed to this subtheme, representing conflicting emotional reactions within and between accounts. Alice's account illustrated conflicting senses in response to the future:

*Alice: I felt kind of like nervous because this is like we we we are talking about my future and I don't really know what's going to happen but I know that it's going to be something good when it happens*

Interviewer: *ok*

*Alice: So errm... I feel kind of nervous*

*(pg. 7, 179-187)*

*Alice: I think the teachers are just so supportive like you don't even get scared of like getting older. You feel like they they are like part of your family and everything because these teachers they know me so well and I wouldn't have ended up being able to think about doing my exams without my teachers and even though I am kinda scared about adulthood but I know it is going to be a really good time in my life knowing my teachers around me*

*(pg. 12, 305-312)*

Analysis across the corpus of data indicated that participants experienced desirable and undesirable emotions connected to the future:

*Mandy: Should I draw a smiley face?*

Interviewer: *Do you want to?*

*Mandy: [Shakes head]*

*(pg. 9, 287-289)*

*Esther: I feel errm... I think I feel like...errm be comfortable*

*(pg.6, 135-136)*

Given the age of participants, the interpretation of conflicting emotional states when thinking about the future was not usual. However, this analysis highlighted



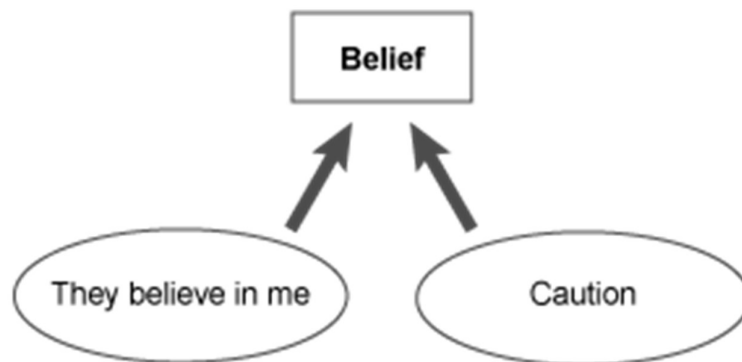
the meaning made of PCAR may have related to emotions connected to the future:

*Alice: and even though I am kinda scared about adulthood but I know it is going to be a really good time in my life knowing my teachers around me*  
(pg.8, 189-192)

*Helen: I don't need to speak about that because I know that there is another meeting like this another time*  
(pg. 10,221-223)

#### **4.7.2 Belief**

This Superordinate theme reflected ambiguity in the sense made by participants of their experience. This theme was underpinned by the subthemes 'They believe in me' and 'Caution' which spoke of the senses of participants of their experience:



*Figure 8. Superordinate theme 'Belief' with subthemes*

##### **4.7.2.1 They believe in me**

This subtheme was generated by a counter-case. The analysis of this data set reflected a sense of trust in what was constructed during their experience of their PCAR meeting:

*Alice: I feel like knowing that what [SENCO name] said that you can do it and stuff made me feel like yeah, I can and I just need to be more*

*confident in maths lessons so I think like everyone coming and giving me good advice just made me feel like yeah I need to be more confident*  
(pg. 5, 131-133)

This subtheme was selected due to its divergence of the sense-making from that of the other participants.

#### **4.7.2.2 Caution**

In contrast to 'They believe in me', four participant accounts reflected 'Caution' in the constructions involved in the PCAR process. The interpretation of this theme spoke of how students tried to make sense of their senses regarding what was heard, said and occurred in relation to their PCAR:

*Alice: Ermmm... I heard loads of arts colleges and stuff so I am kinda looking at them and um they said if I choose they will help me to go and then I can become a photographer so.. yeah hopefully it happens*  
(pg. 11, 266-269)

Alice's use of words like "hopefully" reflected the ways in which she construed the experience of the PCAR. This reflected her use of optimism as a way of mediating her sense of caution. Other participants appeared to employ different ways of mediating this sense. Cameron appeared let down when he spoke about his sense of disbelief in his experience:

*Cameron: I don't know why it didn't change [SADNESS]. I just I don't know*  
(pg. 4, 133-134)

Helen appeared cautious in the way she made sense of her meeting. When asked if she would change anything about the meeting, it appeared as though she was cautious about sharing feedback which could be understood in a negative or critical way:

*Helen: But one thing I want to do different is like them to help me even more at school and stuff I don't want them to leave my side still be with me for year 10 and year 11*  
(pg. 12, 285-289).

This subtheme reflected the ways in which participants perceived and believed in what was said during the meeting. It seemed that participants were hopeful but remained cautious of having full confidence in their understanding of what was constructed during the meeting.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter provided a descriptive account of the process of data analysis used within the current research. IPA revealed five Super-ordinate themes, reflecting participant's experiences of their PCAR. Each theme was described and extracts from the data provided clarity for the consideration and resonance for the reader. The analysis found that the PCAR might serve as a source for information giving and receiving and this was related to how participants constructed their role in their own meeting. Participant perceptions of the relationships they perceive appeared to be involved in the ways in which experiences were recounted and conflicting constructions of the meaning that the PCAR has for these participants and this seemed to be attributed to how participants recounted this relative to their current experience. The reconstructive power of the PCAR was prevalent in the analysis and related to the ways that participants construed themselves and their position relative to those within their social environment. Finally, participant's perceptions of the relationships they perceived in their experience were found to be intertwined with their construction of the overall experience of the PCAR.

The next chapter presents the Discussion, which critically interrogates the findings of this research and provides an account of how these themes address the research questions outlined in Chapter 2.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter overview**

The following chapter provides an interrogative account of the Superordinate themes presented in the previous chapter. Super-ordinate themes are discussed in relation to their ability to answer the research questions stated in chapter 2. Each subsection presented will follow a structured narrative account which gives voice to participants' experiences of their PCAR. A theoretical and contextual interpretation is then provided and discussed in relation to the current conceptual model derived from the literature review (see figure 1). The limitations of this research are discussed before a description of the strategy used to disseminate the findings. Finally, some practical suggestions are explored in regard to future EP practice.

### **5.2 Interrogative narrative**

The results of the analysis do not stand on their own, but rather are subsequently discussed in relation to the extant psychological literature (Smith, 2004). The following sub-sections provide a narrative account of the ways in which this research addresses the research questions. The structure of these sub-sections will follow the pattern of:

- a presentation of the concerns of participants in relation to this phenomenon
- a discussion of these findings in relation to the extant theoretical assumptions of the processes underpinning these experiences
- an interrogative dialogue of the interpretation of these findings in relation to the existing social and contextual meaning shaping our understanding of this phenomenon

#### **5.2.1 What do students with learning disabilities report of their experience of their Person-Centred Annual Review process?**

Two Superordinate themes, which emerged from the data analysis, were found to provide a more informed understanding of what students' report of their experience of the PCAR process. The first Superordinate theme, 'My Meeting?' reflects the participants' views on the 'person-centred' experience. The second

Superordinate theme, 'Relationships', discusses a theoretical interpretation of participants' experiential claims of this phenomenon.

The students' reports of the experience of the PCAR varied between and within accounts. Each account reflected the way in which the students perceived themselves in relation to the meeting. This was evident in the subtheme 'Discovery' through the juxtaposition between the ways in which the meeting was re-counted; in relation to who, at the meeting, was there to discover. Mandy's most assertive interaction with me, during the interview, occurred when the object of attention was focused on what she reported of her PCAR. She corrected me when I asked, "Like what stuff you can do about it?" (pg. 4. 114) by restating her actual response to the question "By yourself" when asked to tell me about what happened at the meeting. This indicated that an important part of her experience, of the PCAR, was both that she was able to describe what she needs help with and what she can do by herself. This could suggest that it is important for 'discovery' to occur for all members of the PCAR.

However, the importance placed on reciprocal discovery between members of the PCAR contrasted with the frame of reference through which participants re-counted their experiences. Across accounts, descriptions of what had been 'discovered' during the meeting were relayed, with more prevalence, from the perspective of other members of the PCAR. Esther shared that "*the annual review, it's because I was like developing well and I don't need all this support...or I need the support because errm... because I need help for... for my subject works, because I get struggle* (pg. 2. 30-33). Analysis of this way of recounting their experiences indicated that participants' constructions of their own 'development' appeared to be formed from more frequently from the constructions of other members of the meeting. Alice also used this external perspective to describe her experiences of discovery during the meeting. She shared "*I remember [SENCO name] saying you've done really well with your courseworks and homeworks, you are a very good person, you love to learn about different things and I think that was really cool and the one thing is that I always care about others more than myself* (pg.3, 71-75). Alice's seemed to be more able to recount a greater number of 'discovered' constructions of herself when recounting her experience relative to those informed by her own views.

The dominance of this external perspective in participants' accounts could be related to 'Apprehension'. This subtheme reflected participant's experiences of, what appeared to be, underpinning feelings of apprehension. These accounts related to how participants described their experience prior to attending the meeting and also with regard to what was going to take place during the meeting. Both Mandy and Helen described feeling nervous about going to their PCAR using language to describe how their bodies responded to the experience of attending. Helen said "*I was actual so scared I didn't know what was going to happen like I was shivering and stuff I was like what am I doing why am I here*" (pg. 2, 36-39). Cameron made explicit reference to his experiences of 'apprehension' about his meeting and provided clues as to the nature of this perception. He said, "*I just don't like to be in a room with so many people that's higher than me*" (pg. 5, 74-75) and used the words, "for me" when talking about constructing targets at the end of the meeting. This experiential claim indicated that Cameron's perceptions of the other members of his PCAR were in some way affected by a sense of hierarchical relationships. This seemed, for Cameron, to be a potential source for his experience of apprehension.

The Superordinate theme 'Relationships' revealed participants' perceptions of their relations to other members of the PCAR. This theme may provide some clues which relate to what students report of their emotional experience prior to attending their PCAR. Participant reports described the experience of having a stronger sense of trust and confidence in the meeting when they perceived the other members of the meeting to know them well. This contrasted with participants' ability to recount members whom they felt a lesser relationship to. 'Relief' also appears to have some interaction with the relationship that the participant perceives toward those involved. Helen's report indicated that her constructions of positioning were shifting, "*in the start of year 9 I was like I have no idea what I'm doing but then SENCO met with me and said they were the new SENCO. I thought, 'ok, that will be alright now*" (pg. 5, 119-122). Her reports provide clues to the ways in which the effect of a developing relationship affected her sense of 'apprehension' about attending her PCAR. This was evident in the way in which she recounted her experience which appeared to include more of her own constructions and

views on her own life. Helen said, *“I got a bit happy and stuff that I was getting more support and that stuff but not that [SENCO name] said they will give me a little bit a little bit support”* (pg. 6. 127-30).

Alice’s account might provide clarity to the significance of the participants’ relationship to those involved in the meeting. This seemed to be involved in her construction of equity in the way she positioned herself relative to the members of the meeting. This was reflected both in the way that she recalled their presence in her experience, *“I think that it’s just that like I know that I’m around people that love me and they love me for who I am and I think that being in that interview... that review is good cos my mum and dad at there and they only know me and my teachers are really supportive”* (pg. 2, 55-59) and in the way that her own constructions of her own life were more prominent throughout her account.

#### **5.2.1.1 Situating students reports within the extant literature**

The theoretical assumptions identified in the Literature review (see Chapter 2), might provide a framework in which to discuss what students report of their experience of their PCAR. Dumas, De la Garza, Seay & Becker (2002) attributed their participants’ external perceptions of control (directed toward service coordinators) to a reduced sense of agency and as limiting to the development of self-efficacy. This investigation spoke of the participant’s comparison of their ability to action their views relative to that of their service coordinators. In the current study, what students reported of their experience, (see ‘Discovery’) might be explained by these external attributions of control. It is possible that the prevalence of external constructions depicts the perceptions of control in the intersubjective experience of the PCAR.

Hagner, Helm & Butterworth’s (1996) analysis found the theme ‘constrains on equal participation’. This theme described more equity in the validity of the focal person’s constructions during their experience. It found that this was a more prevalent theme in the experiences where family and friends were members of the meeting. These findings indicate that there might be an interaction between the perception of relationships that the student has to other members which mediates their own perceptions of self-efficacy and control.

Corrigan's (2014) findings described a disparity between the person of focus and the other members' perceptions of 'competence' in relation to the person of focus. This disparity became greater over time. These findings may have some relevance to the current study in terms of participants' sense of apprehension. It is possible that the other members of the PCAR construction of the focal person's competence were higher immediately after the experience of the PCAR but deteriorated over time. From a Social Constructivist perspective, it is possible that the discursive interaction provided during the PCAR provides the opportunity for redistribution of perceptions of competence through intersubjectivity, thereby effecting the existing positioning structure.

These findings might relate to participant's reports of their experience of their PCAR in the current study. It is possible that participants' experiences of 'Relief' during the PCAR may relate to the discursive interaction. With this view in mind, the conceptual model (see Figure 1) may be extended by these findings to include Positioning Theory (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart & Sabat, 2009). This theory suggests that social interactions involve acts of prepositioning which enable individuals to make claim to, delete or ascribe the subject positions assigned to individuals and/or groups of people. These subject positions are suggested to operate at a more implicit, interpersonal level (Harré & Davies, 1990); so that although in the process of social interaction we may be implicitly positioned, we are also able to mediate the subject position through our own skilful use of language (Burr, 2002).

#### **5.2.1.2 Relationship with prevailing contextual constructs**

Fundamental to the PCP approach, is the underpinning 'social model of disability' (see Chapter 1). The principles underpinning this approach focus on the construct of 'normalization'. This principle posits that it is as necessary to attend to the perceptions of deviance which perpetuate the disabling factors within the environment as it is to focus on the phenotypic expression of deviance. The Interactionist social theory (social model of disability) focuses on the construct of competency enhancement in order to achieve the aims of normalisation. This means the perception of having the necessary ability or knowledge to do something successfully.



It is well-documented, within the literature (see 3.7), that understanding the meaning of participants' communication (inarticulateness) are one of the main challenges researchers report in the use of interviewing techniques in research with people with LD. Given the discursive nature of the PCAR, the implications of participants' reports on their experiences might relate to the intersubjectivity of social constructions of competence. This may relate to the concept of linguistic competence of students. There was some evidence of what this might appear as in Helens' report of her experience, *"ER LIKE... I understand full story like what's going on and I didn't understand because sometimes they might use big chunky words and I'm like what does that mean?"* (pg. 4, 85-89). However, the PCAR appears to offer an opportunity for these perceptions of deviance to be challenged through interactions with one another. *Alice: "yeah I thought about them when they asked me about what I want to do I want to be an photographer I was like yeah I told them that I want to make my own fashion line and go round the world selling my business to other business people so I told them that and they were really surprised"* (pg. 11, 258-263).

Wolfensberger & Glenn (1972) describe the wider ideological expression of the normalisation principle as a human management model. They conceptualise this as a structure which is consistent in its use by those who exercise influence over others. Recent changes in legislation and the subsequent Code of Practice reified new meaning relations in regard to the rights and duties of those working within and affected by educational practices (see Chapter 1). One area of challenge relating to the wider ideological view, as a result of the application of this practice, relates to the discordance between the social meaning of LD relative to the principles of PCP. As outlined in the Introduction of this thesis (see Section 1.6) in educational practices (and within the current research) the application of deviance is entered into in order to apply an opposing practice which locates deviance in the perceptions of the normative majority.

#### **5.2.1.3 Summary of students reports of their experience of their PCAR**

The current research found two superordinate themes which were discussed in order to address the first research question. Students with LD report some apprehension about attending their PCAR which seems to subside as their

experience progresses. Their experience appears to invite discovery about their own self from other members who might be construed as possessing relatively more control and competence. These experiences may relate to the discursive interaction occurring within the participants' experience which can provide an opportunity for the development of intersubjective social meaning and potentially alterations in the perceptions of subject positions experienced by the individual of focus. These interactions were considered with regard to the role of self-efficacy development and the perception of competence was raised. A wider consideration of the ideological effects of implementation of new legislation were questioned with consideration of prevailing traditional model in the field of education.

### **5.2.2 What meaning do students with learning disabilities make of their experience of their Person-Centred Annual Review process?**

The Superordinate theme 'Change and School' was found to provide a more informed understanding of what meaning students with LD made of their experience of the PCAR process. This theme reflected convergence and divergence from the professionally espoused outcomes for students who experience the PCAR process (see Chapter 1 section 1.2). The phenomenological focus revealed some consensus across students' constructions of the purpose of the PCAR in terms of its focus on themselves. This analysis was found to reflect how participants perceived the PCAR as a tool which facilitated changes in their experiences of school life. This perception provided clues to the meaning and significance participants made of their meeting.

#### **5.2.2.1 Making meaning of the extant literature**

What might be taken away from this interpretation of meaning could be related to the findings of Dumas, De La Garza & Becker (1996). In this investigation, the researchers reported that one of the elements, which related to the absence of self-efficacy, was depicted by the theme 'Opportunities for plan implementation'. This theme described the ways that creative outcomes, developed as part of the PCAR, were prevented from being implemented by the regulations existing within the field of practice. This finding may provide some

explanation for the way in which participants use temporal-referents to attribute significance or meaning to the PCAR in the current study.

It is also possible that a somewhat more abstract experience might explain what was found in the current study. Taylor-Brown's (2012) interpretation of the interaction between the psychological climate of the PCAR versus that of the school might offer a perspective on understanding what meaning participants made of their experiences in the current study. In Taylor-Brown's investigation, she describes that the Humanistic climate of the PCAR offered a space in which the students sensed that they were being perceived as a whole person. However, this sense was discordant with the experiences and perceptions of students in terms of their experience in school (see 2.3.5).

This could offer an explanation when considered with what students in the current study report of their experience. It is possible that the experience of 'Discovery' (in which reciprocal discovery occurs) may be facilitated by the Humanistic climate created by the PCAR. The concept of intersubjective may not be an experience which occurs in different contexts (for example, the psychological climate of the school). These findings potentially extend previous research in its focus on perceptions of competence and opportunities for intersubjective interactions within the participants experiences of school.

These findings might implicate the role of the wider school system in what meaning students with disabilities make of their PCAR. Bristow's (2013) analysis revealed the theme 'the impact of PATH' which described changes in the ways that the young people related to both school and home-following their experience of the meeting. Unfortunately, this study did not explore with students the factors or elements of their experiences, following the meeting, that were attributed to these changes. This is also the case for the current study which makes it difficult to suggest which theories might offer an understanding of these findings. However, this might point to some involvement of change in how the focal person interacts and is interacted with by those within their system.

#### **5.2.2.2 Relationship with prevailing contextual constructs**

The indication of the role conflicting psychological climates might be related to wider issues involving national implementation. As highlighted in Holburn (2002), PCP is frequently misapplied in systems that serve people with disabilities. These findings might reflect a conflict between governmental agenda and the pace of and current functioning of educative practice (O'Brien, 2014) or, equally termed, a gap between espoused theory and theory-in-practice. Perhaps the discordance seen within the experiences of students in varying environments might be explained by a need for a focus on 'the workforce and cultural changes necessary for a person-centred approach (S.3, 39). In line with the ontological perspective of this research, perhaps it is useful to consider Cronbach's postulation (1982, p.ix) of the need for synonymous logic between science and politics. By this I mean, the intervention and use of any approach to practice (in this situation PCP) are valuable to the extent they serve the purpose of improving some aspect of the social reality. Therefore, it is perhaps a focus on the development of a social perception of disability within wider systems in which the students develop which might provide a more informed understanding of meaning.

#### **5.2.2.3 Summary of what meaning students make of their PCAR**

This research found that the students with LD make meaning of the PCAR based on how they perceive its role in effecting change in their lives prior to, during and following the experience. Against the findings of previous research, it is possible that the ways in which students make meaning of their experience interacts with how they construe the harmony between the psychological environment of the PCAR and that of their school. This interpretation extends the findings of Bristow (2013) and offers a new perspective of Taylor-Brown's (2012) conclusions. A wider social-political view was discussed to provide a possible explanation of the discordant perception between the psychological climate of the PCAR and the school.

#### **5.2.3 What sense do students with learning disabilities make of their experience of their Person-Centred Annual Review process?**

Two Superordinate themes were found to provide a more informed understanding of what sense participants made of their experience. The first

Superordinate theme, 'Preparing for Adulthood', reflected participants' awareness and interpretation of their PCAR in relation to the future. This analysis revealed that participants sensed that their experience of this process could be used as an age-referent. The subtheme 'Locating oneself' reflected the sense of PfA experienced by students.

This was seen in the use of 'professional language' to describe their own constructions of self. This was also reflected in the terms and phrases used to describe and locate themselves within a contextually derived age-referent. Esther shared her perception of what the PCAR meeting was for, "*For Young People*" (pg. 1, 20), when recounting the purpose of the meeting. This was also reflected in the use of vocabulary to make distinctions between 'life-stages' and locate themselves within this. Alice shared how she construed herself relative to her understanding of age-referents, "*yeah cos after year 11 after you finish your exams you start going to a bit more adulthood and you know you're like a young person now and you start doing things that are like that you want to do in your own personal life*" (pg. 6, 139-142). Cameron also shared his construction of 'life-stages' when asked to tell me a little more about how the PCAR 'makes your life better'; "*Because school is this school but when you get your GCSEs it's becomes life because you need GCSEs for jobs*" (pg.2 49-51). He shared what sense he made of this in relation to where he locates himself in his own construction of age-referents; "*Yeah it did cause it just made me thought about what happens when school ends like I know that I want to go to college man I want to do construction*" (pg. 5, 145-147).

The analysis indicated that participants experienced a sense of 'Anxiety' when reflecting on this construction of their age with reference to their experience. This may relate to the second Superordinate theme which was found to address this research question. 'Belief' reflected an interpretation of the confidence with which participants perceived what was constructed during their PCAR. The data analysis revealed that there was a stronger sense of 'Caution' in participants accounts of their experience. It appeared, from this analysis that this sense of 'caution' might relate to the students' perception of the social belief of other members in the PCAR. Alice shared, "*and even though I am kinda scared about adulthood but I know it is going to be a really good time in my life knowing my teachers around me*" (pg. 8, 189-192). Helens' sense of caution also appeared

to be mediated by the social belief of others, *“I don’t need to speak about that because I know that there is another meeting like this another time* (pg. 9, 213-215.). As described in the previous chapter, it would not be unusual for students to experience these feelings in the context of imminent change. However, these findings provide some indication that participants experienced a sense of reassurance from this experience, particularly in the situations where they were less cautious about the constructions that other members shared with them during the PCAR.

#### **5.2.3.1 Making sense within the extant literature**

From this analysis, it seems that the PCAR may act as an efficacy information source as found in Dumas, De La Garza, Seay & Becker (2002). The current research extends this assumption in that it indicates that this process also involves the perception of the three core conditions (Rogers, 1979) toward the focal person. This appears to mediate caution in the belief of social persuasion provided by members of the PCAR thereby facilitating constructive psychological change.

Given the intersubjective nature of the PCAR, it is also possible that Positioning theory could offer some explanation of the sense participants made of PfA. This theory suggests that ‘prepositioning’ discourse involves listing and sometimes justifying attributions of skills, character traits, biographical “facts,” deemed relevant to whatever positioning is going forward (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). From this perspective, it is possible that the PCAR provides a space in which new ‘biographical facts’ are attributed to the student.

This finding is similar to previous social-cognitive work. Taylor-Brown found the theme ‘new stories’ which reflected a Narrative psychological (White & Epston, 1990) interpretation of the interaction between new narratives in the discursive interaction during the meeting and the ways in which young people construe themselves. The implications of the current study suggest that discursive interaction is involved in how students with LD make-sense of their age relative to the social age-referents in the social environment.

### **5.2.3.2 Relationship with current educational practices**

This interpretation highlights an important consideration for current educational practices. The Code outlines statutory duties for professionals to ensure that the PCAR includes a focus on PfA from at least year 9 (S1.40). This, effectively, creates a distinction between the elements of focus for a PCAR across key stages. What seems to make this distinction is the shift in focus on four specific outcomes (Paid employment; Good health; Independent living; and Community inclusion) which are used during the meeting from Key stage 4 onward (Gitsham & Jordan, 2015). From the current study, it might be considered that a new distinct age-referent was sensed by students during their experience. The strand of the SEN reforms which focuses on PfA has demarcated a new age-referent (14–25 years). The construct of the PfA phase has socio-cultural implications which might explain some of the findings discussed in response to this research question. What participants may have sensed of their experience could relate to this newly reified normative frame. This could interact with the perceptions of members of the meeting thereby altering the discursive process. Perhaps the PCAR emphasises the grounds for new social meaning during the intersubjective process.

From this analysis, it is possible to hypothesise that some factors affecting the quality of outcomes, observed in these areas for students with LD (see Chapter 1), may be mediated through influences on individual construction derived from and proceeded by social relationships. In line with the principles of PCP, this would include the constructions of the members of the PCAR also. From this view, it might be useful to explore the discursive patterns occurring within the process for its meditative effects on outcomes in adulthood.

### **5.2.3.3 Summary of what sense students make of their PCAR**

This research question focused on providing a more informed understanding of what sense students made of their PCAR. The discussion of the themes felt to address this research question, explained the ways in which students' constructions of themselves within the PfA phase interacted with the discursive process of the PCAR. This was considered with regard to relevant literature and the involvement of a newly crystallised age-referent in the socio-political context of the research.

### **5.3 Summary of interrogative narrative**

This interrogative narrative sought to give voice to the perspective of students with LD on their experience of their PCAR. This discussion highlighted that the PCAR can be experienced with some apprehension, caution and anxiety. Particularly in the earlier stages of the process, when hearing constructions from unfamiliar members and when thinking about the future. However, the PCAR can be a place of discovery for both the students and those who attend the meeting. Although, these discoveries about the student can be more heavily weighted from the perceptions of the members and not themselves.

Students with LD seem to use their experiences of school life to help them to understand whether their PCAR is important. When clear connections between change in their lived experiences at school can be made with their experience of their PCAR, this seems to make their meeting appear to be more meaningful.

PfA seems to be a new construct that students with LD are able to locate themselves within. The PCAR seems to provide students with a sense that they are moving into adulthood through the new language used by members of the meeting to position them. This experience is perhaps also influenced by the ways that members of their PCAR perceive them and the social meanings attached to the perceptions of the PfA stage.

The assumptions of positioning theory questioned linguistic ability and the effects of this on the construct of competency. It also considered the assumptions of this theory on the meaning of social relationships within this socio-political context, and the subsequent hierarchical devolution of rights and duties throughout the educational system.

### **5.4 Limitations of this research**

This study originated from a personal and professional interest of the researcher. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of this research present some limitations to the findings of the study and these must be taken into account. The following three key areas considered throughout the process of critical reflexivity during this investigation.



#### 5.4.1 Subjectivity and data analysis

The most pertinent limitation of this research involves its epistemic basis.

The researcher accepts the notion of their subjectivity and therefore the study is limited by the value-mediated analysis of the findings. Larkin, Watts & Clifton (2006) highlight this issue within qualitative analysis and assert that it is not possible to shift between an isolated subjective sphere to impose meaning on a world of otherwise meaningless objects. The researcher recognises the mediation of their own constructions of meaning during analysis and the intertwined nature of this within a meaningful world. Through this investigation, the researcher also considers the limitation of the methodological technique used to generate data with consideration for the assumptions of positioning theory. In the social interaction between the researcher and the participant, it is assumed that the hierarchical nature of meaning relations would influence the agreed meaning during our discourse.

The researcher sought to mediate these limitations through a process of engagement with critical reflexivity, to properly disclose and provide an understanding of my own function and involvement within it. It was hoped that this process would provide trustworthiness due to the fundamental nature of our involvement in the world.

#### *Box 4. Reflections on the category of my own privilege*

Having always perceived myself to be close with some understanding of the experience of discrimination, social exclusion and thwart of agency, the commitment to the phenomenological has brought into question how these beliefs impact on my interpersonal approach to interacting with different groups of people. For me, a salient learning point has been in recognising that lacking in one area of socially constructed privilege (e.g. race, gender) does not infer understanding of the lived experience of some absence of privilege in other areas. These reflections have made me consider how close, in this attempt, the interpretation of this phenomenon has been and what can be learned of a focus on the patterns of meaning within discourse.

#### **5.4.2 Assent**

It is important to consider the ethical implications of these limitations regarding assent. Although the researcher employed a method to address concerns in this area (see figure 3), the theoretical and epistemological assumptions described above challenge the nature of assent in regard to agency. It also highlights the value-ladenness of the data collection technique (what areas of the experience were focused on and what was given importance during discussion).

#### **5.4.3 Limitations of the procedure**

In the initial development of the design of this research, the research set out to recruit between 6-9 participants. However, during the process of conducting the research this was more difficult than initially assumed. From the view of the researcher, it is possible that this could have been related to three different factors. Firstly, due to the nature of EP training, the research and practice-based learning occurred concurrently throughout the duration of the research process. This could have impacted on the researchers' clarity on their specific research tasks and therefore the process of recruiting schools.

It is also possible that due to the relatively new implementation of this statutory practice, it is possible that there could be some hesitation about any investigation of the application of practice.

Another possibility could be that there may have been some apprehension in becoming involved with this research due to the social and communicative nature of the population of students sought for recruitment. There is some evidence in the literature that suggests that people with LD can be less likely to act in a deceptive way in order to manipulate the beliefs of others (Yirmiya, Solomonica-Levi, & Shulman, 1996). It is possible that this attribute of honesty could have caused some caution from those in the consenting network due to the novelty of this approach in practice.

#### **5.5 Dissemination of the findings**

Dissemination of research findings is the delivery of knowledge designed to impact on practitioner behaviour, interactions and/ or outcomes (Chorpita & Regan, 2004). It may also contribute to how decisions are made in regard to practice policy. Sharing a new construction of some social fact may also raise

awareness and/ or understanding of the issues of the participants of focus and the phenomena of investigation. Future possibilities of the findings of research can be influenced by dissemination by providing a basis in which to extend our understanding ongoing research or by opening communication with others interested in building on developing a more informed understanding.

There is growing recognition of the responsibility of the researcher to make adjustments in their approach to dissemination in methods which are accessible to their participants and their peer group (Goodley & Moore, 2000). Through the process of research the variety of questioning techniques used, visual approaches to communicate meaning, analysis and, subsequent critical reflexivity, gave the researcher the opportunity to think critically about the adjustments made in the presentation of research findings.

#### **5.5.1 For students and their families**

The researcher developed a feedback sheet (see appendix 12) visually depicting the Superordinate themes in relation to the research questions. The design of the feedback sheet drew on the ideas of Gray (1994) 'Comic Strip Conversations' due to the emphasis on visually representing differing levels of communication that take place during a conversation. This approach was felt to be more likely to communicate some of the more abstract aspects of the findings of the research.

In line with the ontological perspective of this research, feedback of this sort could provide the opportunity for students to reflect upon the collective experiences and subsequent constructions of students. Each participant who took part in the study was offered a feedback session with the researcher to explain the findings of the research and every student was provided with a feedback sheet (see appendix 12).

A feedback sheet was also sent to participating schools for distribution to families. This communication included a summary of the findings and implications and a copy of the feedback information for students.

### **5.5.2 Sharing the findings with professionals**

The suggestions of Raab (1994) highlight that an opportunity to provide feedback to professionals is a format which could potentially influence the reciprocal interaction between policy and practice. The most accessible way to share these findings was through presentation to EPs in both the University and Local Authority setting which provided ethical approval for the research. This took the form of a PowerPoint presentation (see appendix 15), outlining each aspect of the research process, an explanation of the methodological decisions made and an account of the findings, discussion and implications of the research.

### **5.5.3 Sharing what was learned from the research process with professionals**

The process of conducting this research generated ways of using the data collection and analysis technique to develop EP practice. As discussed in Chapter 3, the literature acknowledges some of the barriers which researchers face in understanding the meaning of what their participants share during research. From the researchers' own experience, it appears that there two further methods to developing our ability as practitioners in our work with students who experience LD.

From the approach used in collecting data, the work of Gray (1994) offers an approach to communicating what is being explored by the researcher in the method (language-based) that they are most familiar. This experience revealed that the use of the participants' own ways of visualising and depicting their experience of their meeting helped the researcher to understand what was being communicated.

The decision to employ IPA as a method for data analysis appeared to present an approach to exploring and interpreting what is important for students with LD. The focus, in this technique, on the phenomenological may support practitioners to capture the essence of the experience of those whom they are involved with. It might also present a useful tool for contributing to the co-construction of 'what is going well' and 'what is not going well' during situations such as the PCAR meeting.

## **5.6 Implications for future research**

The interrogative narrative highlighted several areas of focus for future research. Firstly, it is possible that an extension of the current conceptualisation (see Figure 1) of the social processes occurring during the PCAR could include Positioning theory. This inclusion could mark a new framework for evaluating this process through its focus on the influence of intersubjective activity.

Research framed within this perspective might investigate the social cognitive effects of the PCAR on the members of the PCAR. It might seek to explore how member's perceptions of the individual of focus are influenced by the discursive process of the PCAR. An investigation of this sought could provide a more informed understanding of the principle of normalisation.

Research which might locate its social theory within the assumptions of the materialist model of disability might employ narrative approach to exploring the patterns of prepositioning discourse. This could provide new information which further explores the notion of 'discovery' found within the current research.

Finally, it could be useful for future research to explore the role of PfA in relation to Stage Environment Fit Theory (Gutman & Eccles, 2007). This may explore the PCAR as a facilitator of developmentally appropriate relations.

## **5.7 Implications for EP practice**

A new scope of EP practice has emerged through the enactment of legislation which is underpinned by the person-centred approach. Fox (2015) highlights that this presents an opportunity for EPs to reposition themselves. The findings of this research indicate several practical suggestions for practitioners and a number of abstract ideas which could be useful for our continued professional development.

Firstly, one of the more simplistic ideas that arose from this research (and the literature) relates to opportunities for implementation of outcomes. EPs are often involved in supporting school with the Plan, Do, Review process. Perhaps this knowledge and skill based might be shared with school based professionals in ensuring that outcomes and strategies are implemented and reviewed. It might be useful for the PCAR structure to include a review of previous outcomes to evaluate whether what was co-constructed beforehand has

actually been implemented. It seemed, from this research, that this was a significant issue involved perceptions of the PCAR as meaningful or important. This might be aided by redrafting the structure (Gitsham & Jordan, 2015) to explicitly focus of the four outcomes of PfA

Another more practical suggestion could involve practitioners thinking about what about the PCAR, in Key stage 4 and above, makes it a distinct experience from previous PCARS? This might involve considering how the members of the meeting perceive the student. In addition to this, our profession might consider what effect the PfA construct has on the expectations and social meanings of students aged over 14 years.

This study highlighted that the focus on PfA is involved in how students construe themselves and this seemed to be impacted upon by their relationships with the members of their meeting. EPs might consider the implications of the subtheme 'caution' when considering how to develop a structure and support the wider organisation in facilitating the PCAR. This might, for example, consider who is invited to the PCAR and be mindful of the equity in the perceptions shared.

Many have highlighted the limitations of and potential barriers posed by the assumptions of social model of disability (Goodley, 2014; Oliver, 1999; 2013; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). From a more conceptual perspective, it may be useful for EPs to consider the principles underpinning the current interactionist model under which we practice (see BPS, 2002). Professional practices guidelines outline the need for EPs to attend to the potential power imbalances that arise in their work (BPS, 2002). This research highlighted that EPs could benefit from reflection on their *own* position- how this is ascribed and maintained by the function of and actions taken in their own practice. In the context of the PCAR. The research also indicated that it could be useful for practitioners to consider how discordance between the psychological climate of the PCAR and school may influence outcomes for students who this practice has been developed to serve.

EPs might also benefit from opportunities to explore their subjectivity in these complex social processes in order to make informed judgements about the impact of their own constructions and subsequent involvement in generating

social meaning. EPs will often find that they hold a privileged position relative to the other members of the meeting. Awareness of, and critical reflection on, these arcane material rights and statuses provides an opportunity for EPs to use their interpersonal skills to frame this social process as a dialectical opportunity. The EPs actions and discourse also provides an opportunity in which the focal person can be positioned as equally competent in interpreting the substance of emergent constructions. EPs might facilitate this by using their interpersonal skills and knowledge of learning theories to provide opportunities for best practice to be observed.

Finally, the suggestions of Raab (1994) provide an opportunity for EPs in that educational professionals' act as filters for policy that is being transformed into statutory duties and practice. He argues that practice guidelines are not merely imposed but are always accepted on certain implicit or explicit conditions, based largely on the existing; history, ideology, structure and, location of the school system. (Dale, 1989 p. 61).

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This thesis explored the experiences of students with LD on their PCAR. It is hoped that the findings of this research focus our attention on the influence of our construction during these intersubjective social experiences. For our community, and field of practice, acknowledgement and awareness of the experiences of hierarchical power, from the perspective of those who appear to lack these privileges, might be the next step in promoting social justice. From my own experience of engaging in this research, it seems possible that we might position ourselves as advocates in the ways in which we use our interpersonal skills when co-constructing social meaning in order to take positive action.

Going forward these newly reified structures and processes, available to us through the implementation of The Code, make possible an opportunity to begin this work. Although, it is likely that this will be met with challenges. The issue in terms of social justice, and perhaps with any attempt to create a conceptual shift in ideology, might be that what is not seen is not challenged (Fox, 2013). As a field of practice, our skills and knowledge could allow us to grasp the opportunity provided from the change in legislation to promote changes which

propel the aims of the Disability Rights agenda. A focus on the origin and principles of the social theory in which PCP is derived will likely reaffirm and focus our attention on *perceptions* of deviance. What was learned, by the researcher, in the process of conducting this research revealed that it is possible to develop the skills to focus on what matters to the individual (phenomenological). From this experience, the researcher could make an attempt to discover what these experiences mean to this person (experiential claims) in order to present an account of lived experience from the perspective of students with LD.

Perhaps our current situation provides us with an opportunity to examine our own subject position relative to those whom we serve and question whether our own actions align with the principles underpinning our practice. What seems possible is a future focus on these patterns of relational interaction occurring within this process. This could generate an opportunity to introduce a new and perspective on the use and development of person-centred practices within the educational context.



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## Appendix 1.

### Interview agenda

So, we can start with a warm up question(s).

- a) Can you tell me a little bit about your day at school yesterday?  
(probing questions: Who was there? How did you feel? Where were you?)
- b) What did it mean for you when XXXX? What words come into your mind when you think of XXX?

#### **(A) Meaning**

- 1. Can you tell me about your PCAR [use the young person's language] that you went to recently?
- 2. What is your PCAR [use the young person's language] for?
- 3. Why do you think you need to go to your PCAR [use the young person's language]?
- 4. If you had to tell a younger child what their PCAR would mean to them what might you tell them?

Or

When you think of this meeting what words come into your head?  
If you had to tell a friend why you were in the PCAR [use the young person's language] what would you tell them? ]

#### **(B) Experience**

- 1. What happened when you were there?  
Prompt: direct attention to visual displays of the recorded process
- 2. How did you feel when you were there?  
Prompt: direct attention to visual displays of the recorded process  
direct attention to one page profile or wiki
- 3. Why did you feel this way?

#### **(C) Reflections**

- 1. Now that you have been to your PCAR do you think it has changed the way you think about school?  
How did the PCAR [use the young person's language] make you feel about school now?

Or

What do you think made it not change your mind?  
Variations: Do you think about year 10 and 11? What do you think will happen?

- 2. Do you think about when you are not in school anymore? What do you think will happen?

Prompts: Why do you think that will happen? What things that happened in the PCAR [use the young person's language] made you think of that?

3. If you had to tell a child in primary school how the PCAR makes you think about school differently what might you say?

4. How you think about yourself now that you have been to your PCAR [use the young person's language]?

Prompt: if so, how? If so, why?

5. . What might you change about that [one page profile or wiki] now that you've been to the PCAR [use the young person's language]?

Prompt: if so, what? If so, why?

Or

If we made one of these now that you have been to your PCAR, would it be different? How? Show me?

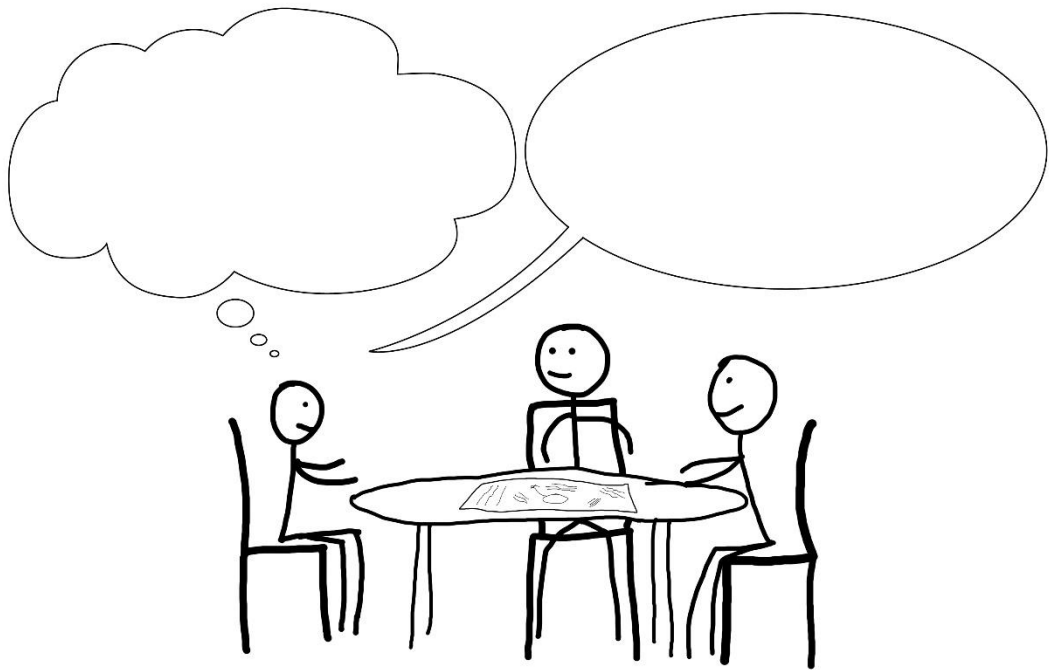
6. . Did anything happen in the PCAR [use the young person's language] that made you think that?

Prompt: if so, what? If so, why?

7. What might have been different if you didn't go to your PCAR [use the young person's language]? (refer to response from C1; How might XXXX be different?)

## Appendix 2.

Example of visual technique used during interview



### Appendix 3.

#### Interview agenda before revision

##### Interview agenda before revision

###### (A) Meaning

1. Can you tell me about your PCAR [use the young person's language] that you went to recently?
2. What is your PCAR [use the young person's language] for?
3. Why do you go to your PCAR [use the young person's language]?
4. If you had to say what this meeting means to you, what would you say?

*Prompt: what words come into your head? If you had to tell a friend why you were in the PCAR [use the young person's language] what would you tell them?*

###### (B) Experience

1. What happened when you were there?

*Prompt: direct attention to visual displays of the recorded process*

2. How did you feel when you were there?

*Prompt: direct attention to visual displays of the recorded process  
direct attention to one page profile or wiki*

3. Why did you feel this way?

###### (C) Reflections

1. How did the PCAR [use the young person's language] make you feel about school now?

**Variations: Do you think about year 10 and 11?: What do you think will happen?**

**Do you think about when you are not in school anymore? What do you think will happen?**

**Prompts: Why do you think that will happen? What things that happened in the PCAR [use the young person's language] made you think of that?**



2. How you think about yourself now that you have been to your PCAR [use the young person's language]?

*Prompt: if so, how?      If so, why?*

3. What might you change about that [one page profile or wiki] now that you've been to the PCAR [use the young person's language]?

*Prompt: if so, what?      If so, why?*

4. Did anything happen in the PCAR [use the young person's language] that made you think that?

*Prompt: if so, what?      If so, why?*

5. What might have been different if you didn't go to your PCAR [use the young person's language]? (refer to response from C1; How might XXXX be different?)

## Appendix 4.

### Information sheet for schools



**University of East London**  
**University of East London**  
Stratford campus, Water Lane London, E15 4LZ

#### **University Research Ethics Committee**

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Fieulleau, Research Integrity and Ethics Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43  
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD  
(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: [researchethics@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@uel.ac.uk)).

#### **The Principal Investigator**

Judith Kusi

Email address: [judith.kusi@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:judith.kusi@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Mobile contact: 07807936263

#### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to consent to the participation of your students in this study. The study is being conducted as part of my Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology degree at the University of East London.

#### **Project Title**

Preparing for Adulthood: An exploration of the experiences of students who experience Learning Disabilities on their Person Centred Annual Review.

#### **Project Description**

Current guidelines advocate the use of Person-Centred approaches to the annual reviews of students' special educational needs. These guidelines highlight the year nine review as the transition point for a focus on preparing for adulthood. However, there is very little research which explores how this meeting and future annual reviews are experienced and what the views of the person at the centre of this process are.

By exploring the views of young people, I hope to aid a better understanding of what this process is like and how it is understood by young people. Through interpretative analysis, I aim to provide themes which might stimulate our ways of thinking about this process and the relationship between professionals and young people.

I am looking to work with students who are in Key Stage 4 and 5 who could be described as experiencing a Learning Disability. Students will need to have attended their Person Centred Annual Review meeting and this will need to be facilitated by an experienced school based professional or an Educational Psychologist.

Research tasks:

- Gathering any visual aids or documents created as part of the process
- Interview with young person lasting up to 45 minutes

#### **Confidentiality of the Data**

Interviews will be digitally audio recorded, using two devices simultaneously – a tablet computer and a digital recorder. Both devices will be protected with passcodes and stored securely by the researcher to guarantee the recordings remain confidential between interviewer and participant. Post-transcription the audio recordings of interview data on the digital recorder will be destroyed. Recordings on the tablet computer will be retained, stored securely; they will be destroyed no more than six months from the end of the research project (June 2017).

#### **Location**

Interviews will occur within the young person's school. The researcher will aim to conduct the interview in the room where the student's Person Centred Annual Review was held or a room the young person is familiar with.

#### **Disclaimer**

You are not obliged to allow the student to take part in this study and should not feel coerced. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time. Should you choose to withdraw your consent for the student to participate in the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. Should you withdraw your consent, the researcher reserves the right to use the anonymised data from participants in the write-up of the study and any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior consent being sought from your students. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study is being conducted, please contact my Supervisor- Dr Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London, E15 4LZ

(Telephone: 020 8223 4455 Email: [m.robinson@uel.ac.uk](mailto:m.robinson@uel.ac.uk))

**Thank you for your time and consideration.**

**Yours sincerely,**

**Judith Kusi.**

Appendix 5.

Consent form for Head Teacher of school

**Consent form for Head Teachers**

**Name of school:**

.....

**This is the form you need to complete to indicate that you consent to young people from your school to participating in the research project:**

**Preparing for Adulthood: An exploration of the experiences of students who experiences difficulties with their learning on their Person Centred Annual Review.**

**Researcher's name:**

**Judith Kusi – Educational Psychologist in Training**

**Please indicate your responses with an X in the appropriate box**

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature and purpose of the research project.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No (I would like more information about the research)
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	---

- I consent to the participation of young people in my school in the research project, pending consent from both parents and the young person themselves.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----

- I consent to audio recording of young people's responses during interviews.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----

**Signed ..... (Head Teacher)**

**Print name ..... Date .....**

## Appendix 6.

### Information sheet for parents

#### **Information sheet for parents/ carers**

Title of research: Preparing for Adulthood: An exploration of the experiences of students who experience difficulties with their learning on their Person Centred Annual Review.

My name is Judith Kusi. I am an Educational Psychologist in Training working for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. I am currently training at the University of East London and will be conducting research in Tower Hamlets. I would like to invite students who experience difficulties with their learning to take part in a research study which explores the Annual Review process from their perspective.

The involvement of students who experience difficulties with their learning is important because there are few robust pieces of research which report from the perspective of the student.

This research aims to give students a voice in the use of this approach, provide an opportunity for them to reflect on this process and highlight ways in which we may better facilitate the Annual Review process.

Please read over the following information carefully as it outlines what the focus of the research study is and what your child's involvement in the research will require for your school. You may wish to discuss this information with your child prior to my introduction.

#### **Which students can take part in the study?**

I am looking to work with students who may experience difficulties with their learning and will have engaged in their Annual Review process.

#### **What will participation involve for parents?**

1. Parents will be provided with information sheets with further details of the research and details of how to get into contact with myself and the University.
2. You will also be asked to sign a consent form to enable your child to participate which you can return to your child's school.

#### **What happens next?**

Following the return of these forms, I will arrange to meet with your child on two occasions. I will work closely with a member of school staff who knows your child well.

These meetings should take up to 45 minutes. During the first meeting your child and I will devise a plan for how best to conduct an interview. I will also speak with staff about your child's preferred ways of communicating.

During the second visit I will conduct the interviews. Your child will be asked questions which focus on what meaning, experience and reflections they report about their Annual Review.

#### **Important information**

I will record what is said during the interview using an audio recorder. This will be stored securely and typed into a word document. Your child and their schools details will be anonymised and what they say during the interview is confidential. The only time I would break confidentiality is if your child tells me something that puts themselves or somebody else in danger.

#### **What happens to the information gathered from interview?**

I will then analyse the data for meaning from a psychological perspective. This will involve looking for patterns across a number of student interviews. I will then develop an overall interpretation of the experience of the Annual Review from the perspective of the students.

#### **What happens to this information?**

This information will be shared with participating schools, the Educational Psychology Service in Tower Hamlets and will form a report for a Doctoral thesis.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any further questions please contact me.

Judith Kusi

Email: [judith.kusi@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:judith.kusi@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Phone: 0207 364 6563

Appendix 7.

Consent form for parents

Consent form for parents/ guardians

Name of student:

.....

This is the form you need to complete to indicate that you consent for your child to participate in the research project:

Preparing for Adulthood: An exploration of the experiences of students who experiences difficulties with their learning on their Person Centred Annual Review.

Researcher's name:

Judith Kusi – Educational Psychologist in Training

Please indicate your responses with an X in the appropriate box

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the nature and purpose of the research project.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No- Please tell me more about it
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----------------------------------

- I consent to the participation my child, pending consent from them.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----

- I consent to audio recording of my child's responses during interviews.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----

Signed ..... (parent/ guardian)

Print name ..... Date .....



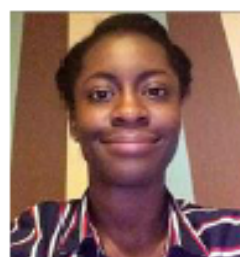
## Appendix 8.

### Information sheet for students

## Information Sheet

Hello, my name is Judith.

I work with children and young people  
in schools in



1. I am doing a project on what it is like for young people to go to a review meeting and I would like to speak with you about it.

2. If you would like to take part I will come to your school to see you and you can choose to share something you like with me.

If you are happy to take part in my project then on another day we can talk with each other about going to your review meeting

I will ask you some questions and use a tape recorder to remember your answers.

If you don't want to do it anymore you can tell me or the chosen adult in school.

3. You can choose an adult in school you would like to come with you when we talk.

I will not tell anyone what your answers were unless it puts you or someone else in danger.

When I have spoken with a few more young people about their review meetings I will write about what I have found out.

I will not use your real name so that other people will not know who spoke with me about their review meetings.

4. My name is:

and I am happy to talk with Judith for her project.

Thank you



Appendix 9.

Assent form for students

## Consent Form

Hello, my name is Judith.



This sheet is to make sure you would like to take part in my project.

1. Do you understand what Judith's project is about?

☐

No

☐

A little bit  
(Tell me more)

☐

Yes

2. Are you happy to do the project and talk with Judith about your review meeting?

☐

No

☐

Yes

3. Is it ok for Judith to record us when we talk so that she can remember what we have said to each other?

☐

No

☐

Yes

4. Name:

Thank you

## Appendix 10.

### Ethical review feedback form

<b>School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee</b>
<b>NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION</b>
For research involving human participants BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

**REVIEWER:** Melanie Vitkovitch

**SUPERVISOR:** Mary Robinson

**COURSE:** Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

**STUDENT:**  
Judith KUSI

**TITLE OF PROPOSED STUDY:** Am I 'Preparing for Adulthood?': An exploration of the experiences of year nine students with learning difficulties on their Person Centred Annual Review.

**DECISION OPTIONS:**

- 1. APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
- 2. APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
- 3. NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

**DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY**  
(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

Approved with minor amendments
--------------------------------

**Minor amendments required (for reviewer):**

Usually the information sheet is separate sheet to the university consent form sheet – might be better to do this as can lay it out a little easier. Give some indication of the nature of the questions/topics you might be interested in.
---

## Appendix 11.

### Risk assessment

- Ensure that this information sheet makes very clear to parents that the young person will also be asked on the day if they wish to take part (and a check made during the interview).
- It is better practice to agree not to use the anonymised data, should a parent or young person withdraw (and please give a date by which they can decide to withdraw and how to do this)
- Allowing the child to help choose the code/alternative ID could mean transcripts not anonymous – so please just choose a random code/ID
- Discuss with the support staff who will accompany young person what kind of support would be given if the young person becomes unsettled by some of the questions
- 

**Major amendments required (for reviewer):**

#### **ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER (for reviewer)**

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

- ☐ HIGH
- ☐ MEDIUM
- ☒ LOW

*Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):*

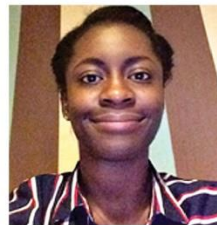
**Reviewer (Typed name to act as signature):**

Melanie Vitkovitch

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016

Appendix 122.

Feedback sheet for students



Thank you very much for speaking with  
me about your Person-Centred Annual  
Review meeting.

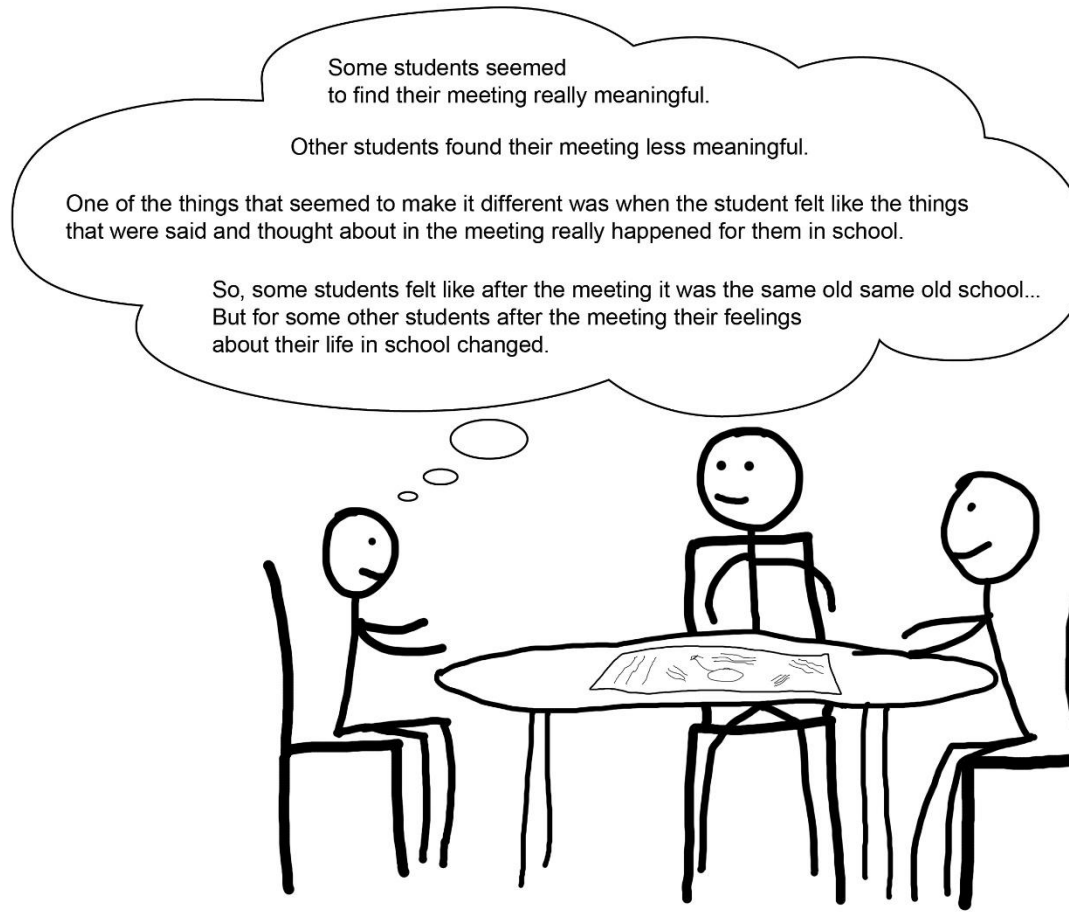
Here are some of the things that I found  
out from all of the students that I spoke to.

Judith

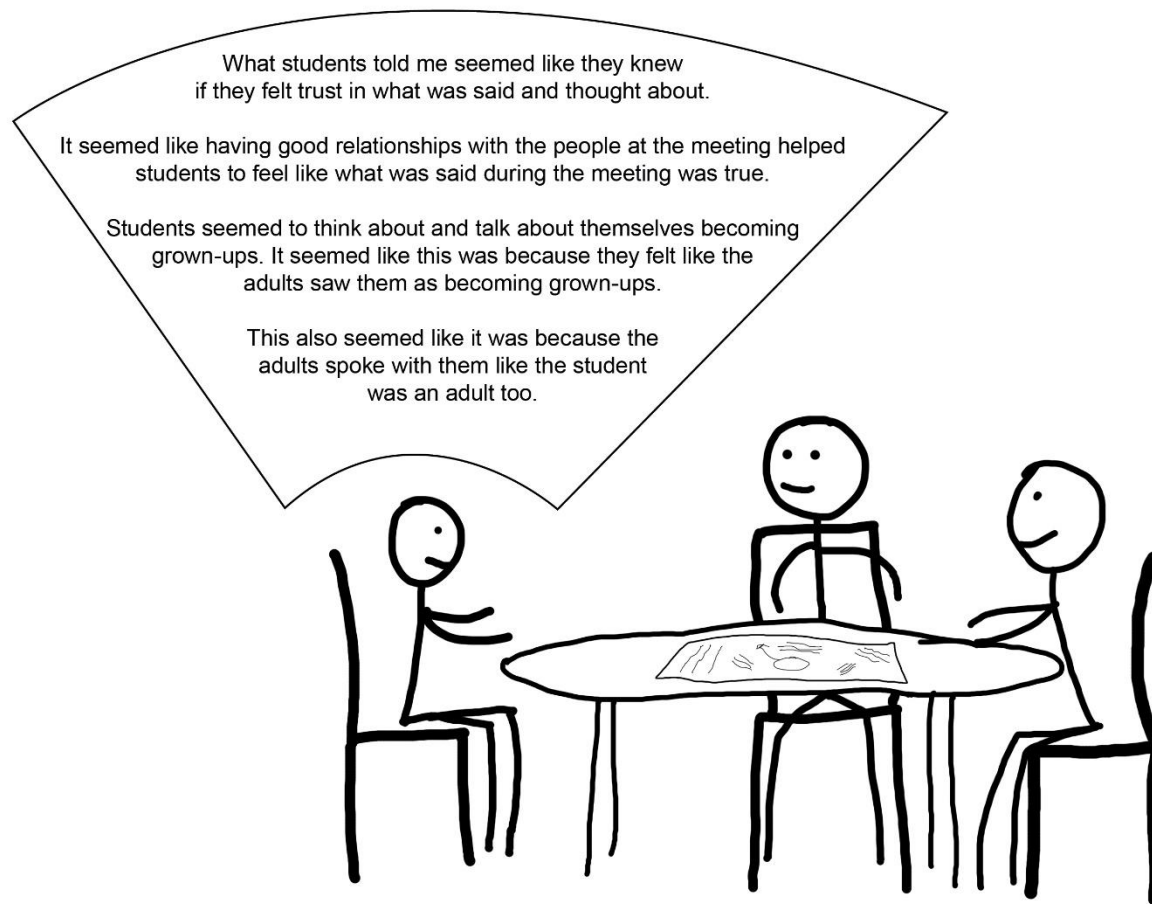
What did students say about their Person-Centred Annual Review meeting?



What did students say the Person-Centred Annual Review meeting meant to them?



Which feelings did students get from being at their Person-Centred Annual Review meeting?



## Appendix 13

### Transcribed data



## Appendix 14

### Phenomenological coding

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Developing line-by-line coding, staying close to data; generating possible interpretations</i>	<i>line-by-line coding, staying close to data; generating possible interpretations</i>	<i>line-by-line coding, staying close to data; generating possible interpretations</i> <i>Object of concern experiential claim</i>
Alice	<p>Best? Not being here would mean worst?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M: because I think it's best for me to be here</li> </ul> <p>Power/ knowledge of school/ adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>because I don't really know my grades and SENCO knows all my grades and stuff</li> </ul> <p>Relief? Enlightenment/ insight?</p>	<p>I: ok, and why do you think you have to be at that meeting?</p> <p>M: because I think it's best for me to be here because I don't really know my grades and SENCO knows all my grades and stuff and to know my mum and dad are supporting me with my education it means a lot</p> <p>2: 38-42</p> <p>M: I would say that Errm- don't be nervous and everything will be ok and just be yourself when you are in that interview I mean that review because you know if you be yourself that means that you are showing them that you are really interested in it and it just take everything easy</p>	<p><b>Necessity to be there</b> <b>Or best as in best thing as it has changed things</b></p> <p><b>This is enlightening or provides a place for insight into your own life</b></p>

	<p>That it can change things That she is the same Normalisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• : eerm, like in school we all have our different subjects that we are strong at some</li> </ul> <p>Developing perception of ability to try (increase in motivation/ belief)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• so I need really help in them so I think in that review it taught me that you know even if you try and stuff you'll reach that subject then you do really well and subject...</li> </ul>	<p>I: that's good. Ok and we are going to talk a little bit about your reflections on your meeting. So maybe the things you thought about the meeting after you went there. SO now that you have been to your annual review meeting do you think its changed how you think about school</p> <p>M: Yeah</p> <p>I: do you want to tell me a little bit about that?</p> <p>M: eerm, like in school we all have our different subjects that we are strong at some schools, some of the subjects I'm not strong at and that so I need really help in them so I think in that review it taught me that you know even if you try and stuff you'll reach that subject then you do really well and subject...</p> <p>4: 92-104</p> <p>I think it would be harder because not that many students have annual reviews only like some people do and I feel like that every student should have one because like it shows like that...that but even if you chosen and what's well in school and what's bad in school and it shows them what level you at and if and if people can help you and give you advice and stuff so I think is everyone if I didn't have them then I wouldn't get the love and support that I have from SENCO and I..I wouldn't not get my grades and stuff so I am very happy for it</p> <p>262-271</p>	<p>Ability as a learner</p> <p>Equal-this is 'normal'</p> <p>Climate</p> <p>Love- intentionality</p>
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	<p>Change of emotional state from bad -how I feel? It was really bad and stuff? Now I feel I could do maths every single day I feel more confident</p> <p>Change in perception of self and abilities -Now I feel I could do maths every single day I feel more confident like I can put my hands up no matter what and like i feel really confident</p>	<p>I: laughs ok let me change... let me think of a better way to say that.... What about the meeting do you think made the difference for you in how you see the more hard things you have to do at school? M: errrm.. in that meeting.. you know like further and further maths and stuff and how I feel? It was really bad and stuff? Now I feel I could do maths every single day I feel more confident like I can put my hands up no matter what and like i feel really confident knowing that I even though i am bad at maths i still can try and there is a possibility that I can get a good grade</p> <p>111-121</p>	<p>Experience of school So difficult to do the things that are innately challenging</p> <p>This is anger depressing frustrating sad Hopeful</p>
	<p>Nervous- not used to hearing positives? Unfamiliar with this experience? -Errm it made me feel.. At first it was really nervous cos I don't know what's going to happen Belief that it can improve, perceptions of help or support -the interview went on I thought really happy because things were good and things were to improve so that was kinda like easy for me</p>	<p>I: That's lovely. And when they were talking about what's going well how did that make you feel? M: Errm it made me feel.. At first it was really nervous cos I don't know what's going to happen but slowly slowly as the interview went on I thought really happy because things were good and things were to improve so that was kinda like easy for me</p> <p>74-79</p>	<p>The meeting/ hearing positives about yourself Offers a place where you can get advice and support</p> <p>Hope</p>
	<p>Belief about oneself can change actions -confident like I can put my hands up no matter what</p> <p>Possibilities choices made concrete</p>	<p>confident like I can put my hands up no matter what and like i feel really confident knowing that I even though i am bad at maths i still can try and there is a possibility that I can get a good grade</p>	<p>Ability to learn in the mainstream school environment</p> <p>Hope/ belief future</p>

	-that I even though i am bad at maths i still can try and there is a possibility that I can get a good grade	118-121	
	Knowing not hearing (assimilating into construction of oneself? - I feel like knowing that what SENCO said that you can do it and stuff made me feel like yeah I can Simple 'I' -and I just need to be more confident in maths lessons	M: I feel like knowing that what SENCO said that you can do it and stuff made me feel like yeah I can and I just need to be more confident in maths lessons so i think like everyone coming and giving me good advice just made me feel like yeah I need to be more confident  127-131	Belief and relationship from others  Agency
	Apprehension about the word adult? Move to young person -So a bit more adulthood and you know you're like a young person now  Agency can start taking control -you start doing things that are like that you want to do in your own personal life	M: yeah cos after year 11 after you finish your exams you start going to a bit more adulthood and you know you're like a young person now and you start doing things that are like that you want to do in your own personal life and I feel like doing that the review made me feel like yeah I'm growing up but yeah there are some opportunities I can reach out for  135-140	Adulthood  Freedom and choice
	Change in feeling -like you don't even get scared of like getting older....  Even though I am kinda scared about adulthood Support system is important -but I know it is going to be a really good time in my life knowing my teachers around me	M: I think the teachers are just so supportive like you don't even get scared of like getting older. You feel like they they are like part of your family and everything because these teachers they know me so well and I wouldn't have ended up being able to think about doing my exams without my teachers and even though I am kinda scared about adulthood but I know it is going to	Getting older  Scary (without teachers or support from micro-system)

	Love intentionality	<p>be a really good time in my life knowing my teachers around me</p> <p>7: 178-185</p>	
	<p>Change in the environment not within-child anymore</p> <p>-your not gonna change</p> <p>-you don't change yourself because these people give you good advice and even if its like life advice or school advice</p>	<p>M: I think its just like... your not gonna change because having so much reviews and stuff it can get scary but i think after like having one you don't change yourself because these people give you good advice and even if its like life advice or school advice they always gonna support you they just give you some good advice and even if there's bad things about you and good things about you you can change that yourself. You can say like oh I've done bad at maths I can just go online and do more maths and stuff or more English stuff something that makes you wanna keep trying you are going through so much challenges and stuff so for the review yeah it should help and stuff</p>	<p>Internal-external change</p> <p>It is not you that changes</p> <p>Feeling supported</p> <p>Adults believing in you</p>
	<p>When asked able to say what she wants</p> <p>-M: yeah i thought about them when they asked me about what I want to do</p> <p>Interpreted reaction as surprise</p> <p>-and go round the world selling my business to other business people so I told them that and they were really surprised</p>	<p>I: so did you think about this in your annual review meeting?</p> <p>M: yeah i thought about them when they asked me about what I want to do I want to be an photographer I was like yeah I told them that I want to make my own fashion line and go round the world selling my business to other business people so I told them that and they were really surprised</p> <p>247-252</p>	<p>My aspirations being heard</p> <p>They listened and they were surprised</p>

	<p><b>Hopeful (not possible? Likely or unlikely)</b>          -and stuff so hopefully it will come          - so.. yeah</p> <p>hopefully it</p> <p>happens</p>	<p>is such a big thing right now and I really want to do like my own fashion line and stuff so hopefully it will come          244-246          M: Ermmm I heard loads of arts colleges and stuff so I am kinda looking at them and um they said if I choose they will help me to go and then I can become a photographer so. yeah hopefully it happens          255-258</p>	<p><i>Aspirations</i></p> <p><i>Hopeful</i>  <i>Not knowing if it will actually happen</i>  <i>Ambiguity</i></p>
	<p><b>Hard- control over time with friends</b>          -who knows when I am going to see them</p> <p><b>Growing up leaving friendships</b>          -everything is going to be changed we are just growing up so it's just a really hard time it's going to be a hard time</p>	<p><i>M: Yeah it gets really like kind of like hard because who knows when I am going to see them it's just going to be like oh hi how are you everything is going to be changed we are just growing up so it's just a really hard time it's going to be a hard time</i>          323-328</p>	<p><i>No place to see friends curated opportunities</i></p>
Mandy	<p>No sense of connection to what happened in school previously          Can you not remember did you come to school yesterday          Yes          And did you have lessons          Yes</p>	<p>So to start off can you tell me what year you are in at the moment          I'm in year 9          And how is it going          Good          Yeah? Is it different to year 8          Yeah</p>	<p><b>School life</b></p> <p><b>My connection or sense of belonging to the school-</b></p> <p><b>passively existing within it</b></p>

	<p>And can you remember what the first lesson was that you had</p> <p>Um</p> <p>Can you remember the first lesson so on Wednesday the first lesson I had was... so was it English was it maths can you remember</p> <p>Don't know</p>	<p>Ok what is different about it let let's think about two things that are different from Year 9 2 year 8 so the first thing that is different about year 9 from year 8 is....</p> <p>Um bracket long pause don't know</p> <p>Is it better is it not better is it harder is it not harder</p> <p>It's better</p> <p>Yeah what is one thing that makes it better</p> <p>Um</p> <p>There is no right answer</p> <p>I don't know</p> <p>What one thing have you really enjoyed doing in year 9</p> <p>I like art</p> <p>You like art?</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>I really like that in school too what do you like the most about art do you like drawing do you like painting do you like to make sculptures</p> <p>I like painting</p> <p>Painting do you like to use any special paints do you like acrylic paint oil paints or watercolours</p> <p>Yeah I don't mind</p> <p>And do you like to draw certain things are you just do any pictures</p> <p>I don't know</p> <p>Thank you you are working really hard don't worry there are no right answers it is just about what you like. So ok another question</p>	
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		<p>can you tell me a little bit about yesterday  what happened yesterday at school so today  is Thursday yesterday was Wednesday what  happened on Wednesday  I don't know  Can you not remember did you come to  school yesterday  Yes  And did you have lessons  Yes  And can you remember what the first lesson  was that you had  Um  Can you remember the first lesson so on  Wednesday the first lesson I had was... so was  it English was it maths can you remember  Don't know</p> <p>1:1-47</p>	
	<p>Correcting unrecognised speech</p> <p>- Like what stuff you can do about it  By yourself  By yourself ok</p>	<p>Yeah I was talking about um my the things that I  wrote  The things that you wrote  Yeah I was reading reading what I wrote  What did you write can you remember  On the computer like  The things that you wrote on the computer go on  Like what do you need help with to start off like what  do you need help with and like um what stuff you can  do about  Like what stuff you can do about it  By yourself  By yourself ok 2:106-116</p>	<p>Views on school</p> <p>Opportunity/ chance to share  opinion</p>



	Recalling intentional	<p>Um I think it said what things do you like, wait...doing what lessons do you like doing and what you don't</p> <p>Ok</p> <p>I think it was like what lesson do you like doing and what lessons do you not</p> <p>and can you remember what you might have chosen when you were in the meeting and you read what lessons are like doing what do you think you might have chosen</p> <p>I like art I like um</p> <p>What other lessons do you think you might of said you like in your meeting</p> <p>I don't know</p> <p>5:136-149</p>	Experience of school
	<p>Shaking?</p> <p>Not clear</p> <p>Sorry I couldn't hear you what did you say</p> <p>Cold</p>	<p>Ok and then Mary says to Clary how am I going to feel when I am at my annual review meeting</p> <p>what might you say to Mary you are going to feel</p> <p>Not clear</p> <p>Sorry I couldn't hear you what did you say</p> <p>Cold</p> <p>And what if</p> <p>Mary says that</p> <p>he's going to feel</p> <p>bit cold what</p> <p>would you say</p> <p>Don't be don't</p> <p>be nervous</p>	<p>The physical response to the meeting</p> <p>Shaking</p> <p>Nervousness?</p>

		<p>And if she says I'm nervous because I'm worried about what they are going to ask me what would you say</p> <p>Um I don't know</p> <p>7: 203-214</p>	
		<p>Ok thank you for your help I was very good ok so</p> <p>h your if we think a little bit about your meeting</p> <p>gain what things did they talk about so they spoke</p> <p>bout your learning did they talk about friends in</p> <p>school</p> <p>(Nods)</p> <p>Yeah? What sort of things did you tell them about</p> <p>our friends in school</p> <p>It's nice to talk to them</p> <p>8: 253-260</p>	<p>Friendship</p> <p>Rare?</p>
	<p>Knowing not hearing (assimilating into construction of oneself?</p> <p>I feel like knowing that what SENCO said that you can do it and stuff made me feel like yeah I can</p> <p>Simple 'I'</p> <p>and I just need to be more confident in maths lessons</p>	<p>Now that you've been to that meeting do you think about being in year 10</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>What do you think about being in year 10 is it exciting</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>Ok did you talk about not being in school one day</p> <p>h your meeting did you talk about being an adult</p> <p>(Shakes head)</p> <p>No? Do you ever think about one day when you're going to grow up and be an adult</p> <p>(Nods)</p>	

		<p>Yeah? What do you think about it</p> <p>Um don't know</p> <p>9: 266-278</p> <p>Is that big enough</p> <p>That is fine and shall we write grown up or adult?</p> <p>Adult.....wait grown up!</p> <p>9: 294-295</p> <p>So let's draw it is Chloe in the meeting and she can ask for adults about being an adult one day so you said this a happy idea you're going to grow up and not be in your secondary school anymore you're going to be an adult so what things would you want to ask in the main thing about being an adult one day</p> <p>How....</p> <p>If we think of one question that is very important to you to ask the adults about being a grown up what might we put in that speech bubble</p> <p>um I don't</p> <p>now</p> <p>10: 312-321</p>	
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Cameron		<p>So I can hear what you're talking about I don't          ke when people talk behind my back          And do you feel that meeting means that people          o not talk behind your back          In a way yeah          How does it stop it from happening          Because I can go and if I need to say something</p> <p>1: 17-23</p>	<p>People talking behind back</p> <p>Advocating</p>
		<p>To make your life better          Ok so not just your learning but your life          Yeah          Can you tell me more about that how does it          hake your life better          Because school is this School but when you get          our GCSEs it's becomes life because you need          CSEs for jobs</p> <p>2: 44-48</p>	<p>Life after school</p> <p>importance</p>
		<p>How did you feel when you were there          Like I don't know the word is for it....like unsure          Ok          I just don't like to be in the room with so many          people people that's higher than me          And Who in that meeting did you have that          feeling with          Just everyone there....not from my family though          You see you all the time in school          Mmhmm</p>	<p>Status me and family</p> <p>Intimidation</p>

		<p>And were there other adults but you do not know very well and do not see  Yeah there was loads they told me who they were so I kind of knew them  And what about your family how were they with them did they seem to know them a bit more  They..I.think it's the same as me um for them  Yeah not really knowing who they are? Or feeling that they are higher?  Yeah  3: 71-90</p> <p>Ok good good and if you had to change one thing about the meeting what would you change  Long pause) how much people was in the room  Ok so less or more?  Less people  And for the people that were there who would still be there if there were less people  My head of year my mum are my sister and somebody from the youth club that I go to senco.....  5:164-172</p>	
		<p>So what are things like in School at the moment  I have been here for a long time and they have been ups and downs but now it is going goods I think that I can get help I got like help when I was doing my exam to read and more time  That is wonderful and was it helpful  Yeah</p>	<p>School exams</p> <p>Worried scared</p>

		<p>And did you talk about that before in your meeting</p> <p>Yeah they said I should have all of that that I should not be worried</p> <p>How did that make you feel</p> <p>Hearing that I was allowed to have that made me feel a bit better I felt pleased what exams are scary they make you scared</p>	
Helen		<p>M: I know it was about me like... getting me into lessons and stuff ER LIKE I understand full story like what's going on and I didn't understand because sometimes they might use big chunky words and I'm like what does that mean? And that er I only knew that my mum came to talk to SENCo saying that I don't like to come to lessons and er the Local authority person was giving me information</p> <p>4:84-93</p>	<p>Going to lessons</p> <p>Worried</p>
		<p>M: I was actual so scared I didn't know what was going to happen like I was shivering and stuff I was like what am I doing why am I here</p> <p>Int: and did it get better or worse?</p> <p>M: it didn't get worser no it got better but I was still scared and then when I got out I was like phew</p> <p>5: 101-108</p>	

		<p>M: I didn't mind that they are helping me do like like giving me like I was like happy that I was there like they would give me even more support and stuff and when I was... in the start of year 9 I was like I have no idea what I'm doing but then SENCo met with me and said she was the new SENCo I thought ok that will be alright now because I was like so scared I didn't want to go inside school or anything but then when I went inside the meeting I was like a bit like you know when I said that I was scared well I got a bit happy and stuff that I was getting more support and that stuff but not that SENCo said they will give me a little bit a little bit support</p> <p>5:115-130</p> <p>Int: errm and then after you left the meeting it wasn't that bad anymore? So was there anything that happened in the meeting that help you feel less worried about year 9?</p> <p>M: (quick response) it felt really like when all the stress I had in my body I feel like I let it out I felt when I said my worries to SENCo and I felt like I had someone who can help to deal with my problem then I was ok yeah like that will be enough me tell SENCo and then errm she was doing like a really.. they were like helping me so so really much and then I feel better in lessons now</p>	
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		8: 195- 209	
		<p>I was like so scared I didn't want to go inside school or anything but then when I went inside the meeting I was like a bit like you know when I said that I was scared well I got a bit happy and stuff that I was getting more support and that stuff but not that SENCo said they will give me a little bit a little bit support</p> <p>5:123-130</p>	
		<p>Int: maybe that's a bit tricky let me ask you in a different way. If you had to tell a friend n school.. you told me about you friend XXXXX.. ermm why you go to your annual review meeting, what might you tell XXXX?</p> <p>M: I don't tell my friends. When people are comfortable to tell their friends like I'm never comfortable. I'm like oh I will never tell my friends. I'm never comfortable. I will look and say oh I can trust that person but I will never tell them anything about my life story but I can trust that person. Like I have one friend I can trust anything with her like I told her that a bit that I had a meeting to go to and I would be out of lesson but I only told her bits by bits yeah but she knows about whats going on to me and stuf</p> <p>6: 147-159</p>	<p>Friendship</p> <p>Shame?</p>



		<p>M: But one thing I want to do different is like them to help me even more at school and stuff I don't want them to leave my side still be with me for year 10 and year 11</p> <p>13:285-289</p> <p>I: So you want someone with you?  M: Yeah, I can't stay alone I have someone.. I need someone to stay with me. If they are like if they doesn't stay with me for a month then I start gets worried like theres no one with me now and I have to do my myself I can't do it myself I need someone with me</p> <p>14: 298-305</p>	<p>Support/ company</p> <p>Lonely alone</p>
Esther		<p>M: I needed support with my homework and because I get I don't know what homework is and things that I've I've I haven't done anything like errm...</p> <p>I: That's alright</p> <p>M: Oh my god oh my god... and and then and then and then I need help from if I go to library if I need help but you are supposed to go in the VLE because it is more quieter and the library is a bit too loud</p> <p>2: 39-47</p>	<p>Independent work</p> <p>Panic</p>

		<p>I: How does it make you feel?</p> <p>M: It makes me feel confident</p> <p>I: Yeah? Can you tell me about feeling confident what do you mean when you say that?</p> <p>M: I mean that I am a little bit little bit nervous little bit</p> <p>I: about going to the meeting?</p> <p>M: Going to the meeting yeah</p> <p>I: Ok, what things do you think make you feel a bit nervous?</p> <p>M: Errmmm.. like I dunno if I going meeting or not again this year</p> <p>3:52-63</p>	
		<p>I: and what do you think makes you feel comfortable?</p> <p>[pause]</p> <p>M: I'm going to miss my friends, I'm gonna miss my friends.....I'm going to have a phone and I'm going to meet some new friends</p> <p>I: and did you speak about this in the meeting?</p> <p>M: errmmmm</p> <p>I: Did you tell them in the meeting that you're going to miss your friends</p> <p>M: [no reply]</p> <p>7:139-149</p>	<p>Friends</p> <p>loss</p>

		<p>I: Shall I repeat? The question I asked was do you feel like you were able to tell people during your meeting about what support you needed?</p> <p>M: Yeah mmhhmm</p> <p>I: yeah? So you were saying to me that you needed help...</p> <p>M: I needed help with my with my coursework</p> <p>I: Ok</p> <p>M: all my coursework and then and then and that</p> <p>8:163-171</p>	<p>Indepednet work</p> <p>Struggle</p>
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## Appendix 15

### PowerPoint presentation of research

# PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD: THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES ON THEIR PERSON CENTRED ANNUAL REVIEW

JUDITH KUSI

## PERSON CENTRED PLANNING, PERSON CENTRED ANNUAL REVIEWS & PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

- PCP is an approach to planning with roots in the Disability Rights Agenda- Social Justice focus
- Fundamental to the approach, is the underpinning 'social model of disability': locates 'disability' or 'disabling factors' within social and environmental processes which perpetuate social exclusion
- Response to the dominant Functionalist social theory which locates disability within the individual
- Two social theories differ theoretically in their focus in the aetiology of disability.
- Sanderson, DoH
- A national review of statutory practices, indicated that good outcomes were secured in local authorities that implemented an 'individualised approach to planning' (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2010).
- Governmental agenda focused on individualised transition support- subsequent funding of the Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) programme within the 'Delivering Better Outcomes Together' consortium

## CONTEXT

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WHO (1980) and BPS (2000):

- Impairment of Intellectual Functioning
- Impairment of Adaptive Functioning
- Onset prior to the age of 18

SEND COP:

- A significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age;
- A disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

UNCRPD (2008):

- “The interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers which hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”

DECP (2002):

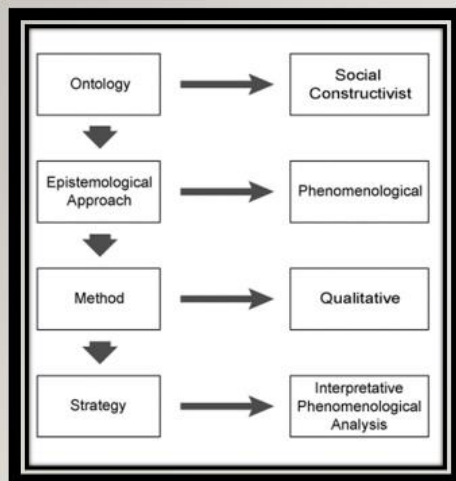
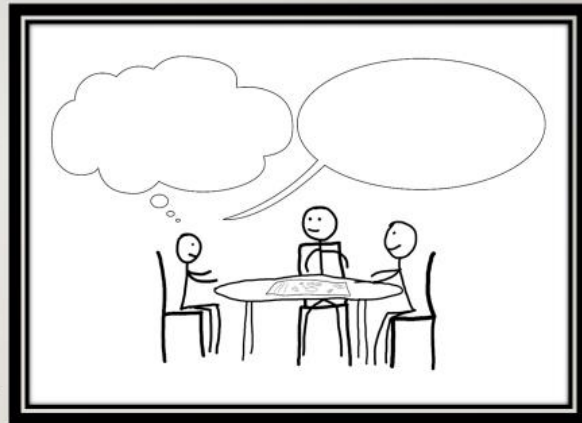
- Psychological assessment of children and young people has moved beyond the positivist and reductionist frameworks... Current models of assessment need to reflect the... which emphasises the dynamic, interactive nature of children's learning and social behaviours with the environments in which they develop.

## RATIONALE AND AIMS

- To give voice to the experiences of students with LD who are at the centre of the PFA PCAR
- Generate a more informed understanding of this experience
- To situate this within the extant knowledge relating to this phenomenon
- To provide an interpretation of this experience within the social and cultural context in which the experience is lived (Functionalist- Interactionist)
- PCP was originally developed to aid the rights of people who experience life with LD
- Post-compulsory outcomes for young adults with LD are lower, relative to their peers who are not living with a LD (DfE, 2016)
- Advocated for use to promote better outcomes
- Statutory duty to implement this approach
- Limited research and evidence for the application of the **PfA** PCAR
- Limited research reporting the perspective of the person at the centre of this process

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do students with LD report the experience of their PCAR process?
- What meaning do students with LD make of their PCAR?
- What sense do students with LD make of their PCAR and the focus of PIA?



## METHODOLOGY

- Focus on individual construction which is derived from and proceeded by social relationships
- In order to study the structures of consciousness experienced directly by the individual
- Approach in line with the epistemology- apprehending reality which is in the form of constructions
- To account for the imposition of understanding- relating to perceptions of competence
- Dynamic of preconceptions- in order to approach the concept of bracketing through the use of hermeneutic

## IPA COMMITMENTS

### PHENOMENOLOGICAL

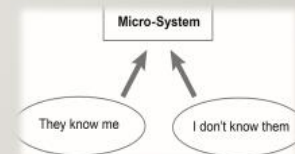
- Making sense of the participants making-sense
- Focused on 'objects of concern'- anything that matters to the participants (events, relationships, values, etc.)
- Then to look for 'experiential claims' (these are linguistic and narrative clues as to the *meaning* of those objects)

### INTERPRETATIVE

- Situated these accounts within the researchers own preconceptions
- Moved to locating the relevance of these accounts within the wider social, cultural and political context

## WHAT DO STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES REPORT OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THEIR PCAR?

What did students say about their Person-Centred Annual Review meeting?



## INTERPRETATION

### THEORY

- Indicated the interaction between language and perception in 'My Meeting'
- This might be explained by the ideas of Positioning Theory from a social constructivist perspective
- Presence of core conditions in the **Humanistic** climate
- Evidence of the involvement of the **mesosystem** in this process

### SITUATING IN CONTEXT

- SENDCoP reifies new social positions
- Professionals and school-based staff asked to implement 'onto' students with LD
- Perceptions of competence and knowledge
- Higher order acts of positioning effecting the interaction, meaning relations and subsequent truth formed

## WHAT MEANING DO STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES MAKE OF THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THEIR PCAR?

What did students say the Person-Centred Annual Review meeting meant to them?





## INTERPRETATION

### THEORY

Harmony between Psychological climate of PCAR and school

Suggesting that this interacts with constructions of the student

(Taylor-Brown)

Ecological systems theory

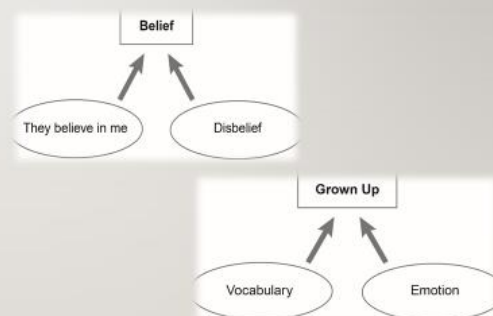
### SITUATING IN CONTEXT

Harmony between espoused theory (Governmental agenda) and conceptual shift in practice

Hierarchical structure of practice approaches- interaction of influence between policy and practice

## WHAT SENSE DO STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES MAKE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THEIR PCAR?

Which feelings did students get from being at their Person-Centred Annual Review meeting?



## INTERPRETATION

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### THEORY

- Suggests that Self-efficacy interacts with how the students make sense of their experience- do they believe or trust in what is said
- Interaction is involved with how participants construe themselves within the world

### SITUATING IN CONTEXT

- Suggests that students experience the PfA PCAR as a process which interacts with how they construe themselves

## KEY FINDINGS

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### RESEARCH

- Reciprocal discovery
- Considering knowledge and importance of knowledge
- Useful in relation to PfA- how students construe themselves in their world
- Role of Positioning Theory

### PRACTICE

- Opportunity to be advocates and work within the Dis. Rights agenda
- For us to consider the impact of our role in building on the conceptualisation of LD through a perspective which promotes equality
- To be aware of and examine our own privileged relative to those whom we serve
- Draw on our interpersonal skills and knowledge of theory to draw the gap between theory and practice closer

## LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

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- Time!!!!
- Recruiting participants
- Social constructivist- subjectivity

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE...

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- Positioning theory
- Subject position- how do we use language to ascribe arbitrary rights and duties for others within a social interaction?
- How does this relate to individual perception of competence?
- With this view in mind, is truth-making a co-construction or generated from those with higher relative power/ arcane wealth?
- How can this be used to mediate perceptions of power within a complex social interaction such as the PCAR